THE SAFETY Will: OF Rom *The Righteous Man* FROM INJURY and HARM:

OR,

If he is perſecuted for Righteouſneſs ſake, his Felicity in that Condition:

Together

With ſome uſeful Directions how to demean himſelf in ſuch a Conjuncture.

The whole founded upon the Words of St. *Peter*, 1. PET. iii. 13. 14, 15, 16.

By DAVID RANKEN, one of the Epiſcopal Miniſters at *Edinburgh*.

K

EDINBURGH:
Printed in the YEAR M. DCC. XV

BRITISH MUSEUM

1. PETER III. 13.

Who is he that will harm you, if ye be Followers of that which is Good?

THE Doctrine of the Croſs is that great Rock of Offence, at which many profeſſing the Chriſtian Religion ſtumble; while they raſhly conclude, that by its Precepts of Meekneſs and Forgiveneſs towards their Enemies, and of unſhaken Conſtancy in the Time of Perſecution, it expoſes them, without Help and Remedy, to the Malice of their Neighbours, and the Violence of wicked Men. But upon mature and ſecond Thoughts, theſe Perſons will find that this is a Scandal, rather taken by them, than given by our moſt juſt and excellent Religion, which promiſes either to ſecure its reſolute and zealous Votaries from Oppreſſion and Wrong,

or that thoſe Injuries and Evils which may befal them in the Practice of their Duty, and a firm adhering to the Truth, ſhall become the Occaſion and Matter of their moſt triumphant Joy for the preſent, and ſhall make Way for their higheſt Glory and Felicity for ever.

Of this we have a very ample and ſatisfying Proof in the Epiſtles of the Apoſtle St. *Peter*, and particularly in the Words before us, and theſe which immediately follow them: *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be Followers of that which is good? But and if ye ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, happy are ye.*

St. *Peter* from the Beginning of this Chapter to the 8th Verſe, gives Directions to thoſe in a conjugal Relation, and very ſeriouſly recommends ſome Duties incumbent upon them. From the 8th Verſe to the Words of the Text, he exhorts the diſperſed *Jews* profeſſing Chriſtianity, and in them all Chriſtians, to Unity, Sympathy and brotherly Love among themſelves; to Mercy, Affability, Charity and Forbearance towards all Men, and to a holy and inoffenſive Behaviour towards God. Which Exhortations he inforces by very perſuaſive Arguments, brought both from their eternal and temporal Intereſts and Concerns; and particularly, that Obedience to them would be the ſucceſsful Expedient of ſecuring their Peace and Quiet in the World, and of intitling them to the Care of that kind Providence that watcheth over

over the Righteous. And then in the Words of the Text, and theſe which are next unto it, he ſumms up his Motives to a holy, peaceable and innocent Converſation, by ſuppoſing it highly improbable or abſurd, that ſuch who in good earneſt exerciſed themſelves therein, ſhould meet with Violence and Wrong, and by aſſerting plainly their Felicity, if it ſhould happen to be otherwiſe: *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be Followers of that which is good? But and if ye ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, happy are ye.*

That is, "If ye nobly imitate him who is "perfectly good, ſetting God continually be- "fore you as your great Pattern and Example; "or, if with an ardent Deſire, and a conſtant "uniform Practice, ye exerciſe your ſelves un- "to true Goodneſs and Vertue, making it your "ſerious Buſineſs to endeavour to approve your "ſelves Pious and Upright towards God, and "Innocent and Charitable in your Deport- "ment with Men: Ye may reaſonably promiſe "to your ſelves Security from Injuries, if Men "be not loſt to Vertue and Probity, and if "God, in his infinite Wiſdom, think it not "fit, for a time, to give way to their Malice "and Impiety. And then when ye ſhall meet "with Evil in the following of that which is "Good, when ye ſhall ſuffer for Righteouſneſs "ſake, for owning the Chriſtian Doctrine in "the general, or adhering to any of its Truths

" or Duties in particular; ye are ſo far from " being in a State of Miſery and Wo, in theſe " Circumſtances, that, upon the Word of an " Apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, ye are Happy.

The Words which on this Occaſion we are to conſider are theſe; *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be Followers of that which is good?* Where the Doctrine plainly ſuppoſed by the Apoſtle's Queſtion is this: *That the Righteous in the Practice of Righteouſneſs, are ſecured againſt Injury and Wrong.*

Now to prevent thoſe Objections which may be made againſt the mentioned Doctrine, or the Words of St. *Peter* which ſupport it, I ſhall endeavour to give that true and full Explication of both, which, I hope, will intirely remove all the Difficulty which at firſt View may appear in this Matter.

Firſt then, The following of that which is Good, or the keeping of our Conſciences void of Offence both toward God and Men; our living peaceably and harmleſly with our Neighbours, and devoutly with regard to the Divine Majeſty, is the ready way to ſecure us from Violence and Hurt: Becauſe this inoffenſive and religious Deportment commands the Reſpect and Love of all thoſe who are not Enemies to Piety and Vertue. So that St. *Peter*'s Words, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be Followers of that which is good?* may in the firſt Place be fairly thus interpreted; " Who will be ſo

" wretchedly

" wretchedly Injurious and Wicked, ſo intire-
" ly deprived of the Senſe of Religion and Mo-
" rality, as to moleſt and hurt you, while
" your Behaviour is plainly and every way
" Harmleſs and Holy? This is an Injuſtice
" and Impiety ſo extremely abſurd and unrea-
" ſonable, that hardly any Man can be guilty
" thereof.

Secondly, The following of that which is good, the ſerving God in the Simplicity of our Hearts, or the habitual Practice of Religion and Charity, will ſhelter us againſt Harm and Wrong: Becauſe it doth intitle to thoſe Promiſes whereby God hath aſſured his Servants, that, ſo far as ſhall be ſuitable to his glorious Deſigns in governing the World, and his gracious Purpoſes towards them, He will protect them againſt the Malice of thoſe who intend or attempt their Hurt. And thus the Apoſtle by the Words of the Text may very well be farther ſuppoſed to mean; " If ye be Follow-
" ers of that which is good, none ſhall be per-
" mitted to do you Evil, unleſs the Divine
" Wiſdom ſee the juſteſt Reaſons for that
" Permiſſion.

Thirdly, That which makes the Expoſition of the Words complete, and puts the Obſervation raiſed from them out of Doubt, is, that the following of that which is good, the fearing God and walking in his Ways, tho it doth not always mollify the Hearts, nor manacle the

Hands of Men, and ſo far defend the Righteous as to reſtrain the ungodly from wronging them: Yet it doth that which is much better, *viz.* it turns the greateſt Injuries of their moſt deadly Enemies to their Profit and Advantage. Which Effect it produceth ſometimes in their temporal, but always in their ſpiritual and eternal Intereſts. Agreeably to which Truth, the Words of St. *Peter* may be expounded after this Manner, " *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be* " *Followers of that which is good?* While ye " heartily devote your ſelves to the Practice of " Righteouſneſs, your moſt powerful and ma- " licious Adverſaries ſhall not be able to in- " flict upon you any Evil, which by the Mer- " cy and Providence of your heavenly Father " ſhall not determine in your Comfort and " greater Good.

And thus the full Senſe of the Words in the Text amounts to this; " *If ye be Followers of* " *that which is good*, either none ſhall have " the Will to harm you; or, if they have the " Will, they ſhall want the Power; or, if they " have both Will and Power, the one from " their own Wickedneſs, and the other from " the divine Permiſſion: Yet, tho the Evils by " which your Perſecutors may afflict you be " Harms as proceeding from them, and with " Reſpect to their Intention, they ſhall indeed " in the Event be Benefits and Bleſſings unto " you; tho no Thanks to them for it.

I. To

I. To return to the *firſt* Part of the Expoſition of theſe Words, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be Followers of that which is good?*

The following of that which is good, that is, the keeping of our Conſciences void of Offence towards God and Man, our living peaceably and harmleſly with our Neighbours, and devoutly with regard to the divine Majeſty, is the ready Way to preſerve us from Violence and Hurt; becauſe this inoffenſive and religious Deportment commands the Reſpect and Love of all thoſe who are not Enemies to Piety and Virtue; ſo that St. *Peter*'s Words may in the firſt Place be fairly thus interpreted; "Who "will be ſo wretchedly injurious and wicked, "ſo abſolutely deprived of the Senſe of Religi- "on and Morality, as to moleſt and hurt you, "while your Behaviour is plainly and every "way harmleſs and holy? This is an Inju- "ſtice and Impiety ſo extremely abſurd and "unreaſonable, that hardly any Man can be "guilty thereof.

There is a very charming Beauty and Excellency in unaffected genuine Piety, in real and uniform Holineſs and Vertue, that inſinuates it ſelf into the Affection and Eſteem of ſuch as are void of Prejudice and ſelfiſh Intereſts, and are not abandoned to a reprobate Mind, and a Spirit of Vice and Immorality. This conſpicuous, honeſt and univerſal Righteouſneſs, when it is obſerved, ſtrikes an awful

Reverence and Regard of it ſelf, even into the Hearts of thoſe, who are not ſo happy as to be endued therewith themſelves, and leaves ſtrong Convictions upon their Minds, that it would be a moſt impious and unworthy Thing to injure and proſecute thoſe who are adorned therewith.

To this Purpoſe it is pleaſant to remark, what a powerful Influence *David*'s untainted Innocence and Loyalty, ſo ſignally manifeſted to *Saul* in the Cave at *Engedi*, had upon that blood-thirſty and malicious King. It did wring Tears from his Eyes in a Senſe of his own Injuſtice, and extorted from his Mouth a moſt ample Teſtimony to *David*'s Righteouſneſs and Integrity 1. *Sam.* xxi. throughout. And when *David* repeated the former Proof of his invincible Loyalty, and could not be perſwaded to deſtroy tyrannical & perſecuting *Saul*, who returned to hunt him for his Life; Then *Saul* was under ſuch ſtrong Convictions of his own Iniquity and *David*'s Innocence, after that *David* had expoſtulated with him for his groundleſs Cruelty againſt him, that he openly acknowledged both the one and the other, and aſſured *David* that he would injure him no more, 1. *Sam.* xxvi. *Then ſaid Saul, I have ſinned: Return, my Son* David, *for I will no more do thee harm, becauſe my Soul was precious in thine Eyes this Day: Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.*

Suitably

Suitably to the Buſineſs in hand, the Evangeliſt St. *Mark* gives us an Account, that *Herod*, tho he was far from being a true Convert, was under ſuch an Aw and Reverence of St. *John* the Baptiſt's ſevere and renowned Piety and Righteouſneſs, that he long reſiſted the Sollicitations of *Herodias* to take away his Life; and when he was trepanned into the doing thereof, he was exceeding ſorry, *Mark* vi. 19, 20. *Herodias had a Quarrel againſt* John, *and would have killed him, but ſhe could not. For* Herod *feared* John, *knowing that he was a juſt Man and an holy, and obſerved him, and when he heard him, he did many Things, and heard him gladly.*

As the following of that which is good, in the conſtant and ingenuous Exerciſe of Piety towards God, Humility, Purity and Modeſty towards our ſelves, and Courteſy, Equity, Peace, Long-ſuffering and Charity towards others, is a great Security to the Chriſtian againſt private Injuries, and undoubtedly will continue to be ſo, while Men do not deveſt themſelves of Humanity, Reaſon, Religion, Juſtice and Probity: So likewiſe it gives to Perſons of this pious and innocent Deportment a Right to the Protection of the Magiſtrate, or higher Powers, who, as the Apoſtle St. *Paul* affirms, from the Nature and Deſign of their Office, *are not a Terror to good Works, but to the evil.*

Thus

Thus we ſee, that the good Man, while he follows that which is good, hath not only the juſteſt Claim to Security from Harm whether private or publick, but that he may alſo reaſonably promiſe unto himſelf the undiſturbed Enjoyment of that Security, ſo long as his Rulers or Neighbours behave with any Congruity or Reſpect to Juſtice and Vertue. So that truly the Method propoſed by the Pſalmiſt for a ſafe and quiet Life, and the peaceable Poſſeſſion of our Rights and Intereſts, ſeems to be effectual to that End, not only from the Promiſe of God, but alſo from the natural Tendency and Fitneſs thereof. *Pſ.* xxxiv. 12, 13, 14. *What man is he that deſireth Life, and loveth many Days that he may ſee Good? Keep thy Tongue from Evil, and thy Lips from ſpeaking Guile. Depart from evil, and do good: Seek Peace and purſue it.*

But ah Friends! I muſt acknowledge, after all that I have ſaid, concerning the Charms, and conquering Force of genuine & reſplendent Holineſs and Vertue, that ſo great is either the Ignorance or Perverſeneſs of many, that they abhor the Righteous and Orthodox for their inſuperable Uprightneſs and eminent Sanctity, becauſe theſe excellent Perſons will not ſacrifice their Faith to the Humour, nor conform their Practices to the vitious Examples of the World; they therefore become the Object of its moſt implacable Hatred, and the Subject of its

its moſt injurious and cruel Proſecutions, when it is not reſtrained by Providence: Which obliges me to offer to your Conſideration the *ſecond* Part of the Expoſition of the Text, or Limitation of the Doctrine raiſed from it, *viz.*

II. The following of that which is good, the ſerving God in the Simplicity of our Hearts, or the habitual Practice of Religion and Charity, will ſhelter us againſt Harm and Wrong; becauſe it doth entitle to thoſe Promiſes, whereby God hath aſſured his Servants, that ſo far as ſhall be ſuitable to his glorious Deſigns in governing the World, and gracious Purpoſes towards them, he will protect them againſt the Malice of thoſe who intend, or attempt their Hurt. And thus the Apoſtle, by the Words of the Text, may very well be farther ſuppoſed to mean; "If ye be Followers "of that which is good, none ſhall be permit-"ted to do you evil, unleſs the divine Provi-"dence ſee the juſteſt Reaſons for that Permiſ-"ſion.

From among the vaſt Number of Promiſes recorded in Scripture to the Purpoſe I have juſt now named, we may take notice of theſe which follow. The Prophet *Hanani* rebuking *Aſa* for a very ſhameful Inſtance of Diſtruſt in the Divine Providence, inforces his Reproof from this Conſideration, that God watcheth over his Servants with the moſt vigilant Care, and ſtands by them as their moſt faithful and vali-

ant

ant Champion, exerting his Omnipotence in their behalf. 2. Chron. xvi. 9. *The Eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the Earth, to ſhew himſelf ſtrong in the behalf of them whoſe Heart is perfect toward him.* Which comfortable Truth is very clearly atteſted in the xci. and cxxi. Pſalms, *He that dwelleth in the ſecret place of the moſt High, ſhall abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty. I will ſay of the Lord, he is my Refuge, and my Fortreſs: My God in him will I truſt. Surely he ſhall deliver thee from the Spear of the Fowler, and from the noyſom Peſtilence. He ſhall cover thee with his Feathers, and under his Wings ſhalt thou truſt: His Truth ſhall be thy Shield and Buckler.* Pſal. xci. And when the Pen-Man of the cxxi. Pſalm had firſt expreſſed his fixed Reſolution of truſting in God, he then gives an Account of the ſolid Grounds upon which his Confidence was eſtabliſhed, *viz.* the conſtant, merciful and watchful Providence of God over ſuch as walk in his Ways. *Behold he that keepeth Iſrael ſhall neither ſlumber nor ſleep. The Lord is thy Keeper: the Lord is thy Shade upon thy right Hand. The Lord ſhall preſerve thee from all evil, he ſhall preſerve thy Soul.*

The Experience of this gave Occaſion to *Iſaiah* to magnify God after this remarkable Manner, *Iſ.* xxv. 1. and 4. *O Lord thou art my God, I will exalt thee, I will praiſe thy Name; for thou haſt done wonderful things; Thy Counſels*

of

of old are Faithfulneſs and Truth. For thou haſt been a Strength to the Poor, a Strength to the Needy in his Diſtreſs, a Refuge from the Storm, a Shadow from the Heat, when the Blaſt of the terrible ones is as a Storm againſt the Wall. The ſame Prophet hath a moſt full and refreſhing Promiſe relating to the preſent Purpoſe, *Iſ.* liv. 14, 17. *In Righteouſneſs thou ſhalt be eſtabliſhed: Thou ſhalt be far from Oppreſſion, for thou ſhalt not fear; and from Terror, for it ſhall not come near thee. No Weapon that is formed againſt thee ſhall proſper, and every Tongue that ſhall riſe againſt thee in Judgment, thou ſhalt condemn.* And to point out how ſure and univerſal a Privilege this is to all the Righteous, he adds, *This is the Heritage of the Servants of the Lord.*

Now, for our greater Satisfaction in this Matter, we may obſerve, that there are ſeveral Ways whereby God ordinarly accompliſhes his Promiſes of Protection to the Followers of that which is Good. For either he changes the Hearts of their Enemies, ſo that they become Favourers and Friends; or he ſo reſtrains and overaws their Malice againſt his Servants, that they do not expreſs it by overt Acts; or, if they do, he defends them againſt the Effects thereof: Thus by the one or other Way fulfilling *Solomon*'s Obſervation, *Prov.* xvi. 7. *When a Man's Ways pleaſe the Lord, he maketh even his Enemies to be at Peace with him*; and that in the *Pſal.* xcvii. 10. *He preſerveth the Souls*

of

of his Saints, he delivereth them out of the Hand of the wicked.

1. *First*, I ſay God ſometime accompliſhes his Promiſes of Protection to his Servants, by changing the Hearts and Diſpoſitions of their bittereſt Enemies, ſo that they become Favourers and Friends. The infinitely Wiſe God gives wonderful Proofs of his adorable Conduct in this Particular, and frequently lets us ſee that *the Hearts of Kings*, as well as of inferior Perſons, *are in his Hand, as the Rivers of Water: And that he turneth them whitherſoever he will.* Prov. xxi. 1.

Eſau was the cruel and inveterate Enemy of *Jacob*, and fully reſolved to have killed him. For the preventing of this, *Jacob* was adviſed by his Parents to leave their Family for a Seaſon, and to retire to *Padan-Aram*. From whence when he was returning, and underſtood by the Meſſengers he had ſent to ſalute his Brother *Eſau*, and to deprecate his Wrath, that he was coming with a Retinue of four Hundred Men to meet him: Then, as the Text expreſſeth it, *he was greatly afraid and diſtreſſed*, which he ſheweth by this paſſionate Prayer, *Deliver me, I pray thee, from the Hand of my Brother, from the Hand of* Eſau: *For I fear him leſt he will come, and ſmite me, and the Mother with the Children*, Gen. xxxii. 7. 11. After this in the following Chapter, we find a great Change in the Affections of *Eſau* towards his

his formerly abhorred Brother, xxxiii. 4. *He ran to meet* Jacob, *and imbraced him, and fell on his Neck and kiſſed him; and they wept.*

We read alſo in the Book of *Exodus*, That the *Iſralites* were an Abomination to the *Egyptians*; that *Pharaoh* and his People oppreſſed them with a ſore Bondage, enſlaving their Perſons, and murthering their Children: And yet when the *Iſraelites* were a leaving *Egypt*, and might have expected nothing from the *Egyptians* but Wrath and Revenge, *Moſes* tells us, that *God gave them Favour in the Sight of the* Egyptians, *ſo that they lent them Jewels of Silver and Jewels of Gold, and ſuch Things as they required.* Exod. xi. 3, 12, 35, 36.

Suitable to the Obſervation before us, we have a moſt remarkable Inſtance in St. *Paul*. He was before his Converſion a moſt bigotted Phariſee, and extremely enraged againſt the Diſciples of Chriſt; He conſented to the Death of the Proto-martyr St. *Stephen*, he made Havock of the Church, and breathed out nothing but Threatnings and Slaughter againſt the Followers of *Jeſus*: And, being hurried on by an officious and bloody Zeal, he went, uncalled, unto the high Prieſt, and deſired of him Letters to *Damaſcus* to the Synagogues, that if he found any of this Way, whether they were Men or Women, he might bring them bound unto *Jeruſalem*. Notwithſtanding all this, before this furious and implacable Perſecutor reached *Damaſcus*,

maſcus, he was miraculouſly convinced of his blind Zeal; and his Heart and Diſpoſition were happily altered by the mighty Power of that Jeſus whom he perſecuted; ſo that, all of a ſuddain, he became a bold and zealous Preacher of the Doctrine which he intended to ſuppreſs, and a moſt fervent Lover of that Sect which he had reſolved utterly to deſtroy. *Acts* viii. & ix.

2. *Secondly*, God preſerves the honeſt Followers of that which is good from Harm and Violence, by ſo chaining up and overawing the Malice of their Enemies, that however their inward Hatred and Spite remain, yet they do not manifeſt it by outward Injuries.

In Proof of this, it is worthy of our Notice, that when pious *Jacob*, *Gen.* xxxiv. 30. was juſtly apprehenſive of the Revenge of the *Canaanites* and *Perizzites* againſt him and his Houſe, upon the Account of that inhumane and deteſtable Cruelty perpetrated by his Sons, *Simeon* and *Levi*, upon the *Shechemites*: Then the Lord was pleaſed in his tender Mercies, and Regard to this good Man, to ſtrike the Terror of God upon the Cities that were round about, ſo that they did not purſue after him and his Sons, *Gen.* xxxv. and 5. 'Tis to this Reaſon and Cauſe that the ſame *Jacob*, in his Expoſtulation with *Laban* his Father-in-law, aſcribes his own Safety, and *Laban*'s not having proceeded to execute his evil Purpoſes againſt him, *Gen.* xxxi. 42. *Except the God of my Father, the God of*

Abraham,

Abraham, *and Fear of* Iſaac *had been with me, ſurely thou hadſt ſent me away now empty: God hath ſeen mine Affliction, and the Labour of my Hands, and rebuked thee yeſternight.*

Agreeably to this we find, that when the Lord, *Exod.* xxxiv. 23. had peremptorily appointed all the Men-children of *Iſrael* to appear before him thrice in the Year; to prevent the Objection of an Invaſion by the neighbouring Nations on theſe Occaſions, he gives them this ſolemn Aſſurance in the 24 Verſe of the ſame Chapter, *I will caſt out the Nations before thee, and enlarge thy Borders: neither ſhall any Man deſire thy Land, when thou ſhalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God, thrice in the Year.*

3. *Thirdly*, As the Enemies of the Righteous are often conſtrained to conceal or ſuppreſs their Malice againſt them, and to ſtiffle the Eruption thereof into overt Acts: So when God thinks it fit to interpoſe his Power, he ſcreens the Righteous from the moſt furious Aſſaults of their open Hatred and Wrath.

Of this the moſt exalted Majeſty of Heaven and Earth hath given, all along, the moſt aſtoniſhing and memorable Proofs. Ye know by what a ſtupendous Inſtance of his Power he preſerved the Children of *Iſrael* in the *Red-Sea*, from the Wrath of powerful and malicious *Pharaoh*: And how he protected *David* againſt *Saul*'s puiſſant, unwearied and moſt bloody Cruelty; and the Life of *Elijah* from the helliſh

Fury of *Ahab* and *Jezebel*. How often did God ſave his Servant St. *Paul* from the Plots and Attempts of the enraged *Jews*? and particularly from the Conſpiracy of thoſe mad Zealots, who had banded together, and bound themſelves under a Curſe, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed him? Can ever the Friends of God, or the conſtant Followers of that which is good, forget the Wonders of the divine Wiſdom and Power, ſo glorioufly manifeſted in the Preſervation of thoſe undaunted Martyrs, *Shadrach*, *Meſhach* and *Abed-nego*, while they were in the burning fiery Furnace; and of that good and worthy Patriot *Mordecai*, and the whole Race of the *Jews*, ſo near to Deſtruction by the horrid Contrivance of prodigiouſly cruel *Haman*?

And now, Brethren, after what hath been ſaid hitherto, in giving you an Account of the Security of the Righteous from Violence and Wrong; we muſt remember that God hath not bound himſelf to the Performance of this abſolutely and without all Exception: But that he retains to himſelf a Right to diſpoſe thereof, as he does of all other temporal Bleſſings: Which he hath promiſed, now eſpecially under the Goſpel, with the Reſerve of their being found in the Accompliſhment of them ſubſervient to his own Glory, and the eternal Good of his Servants. And therefore, he who knows perfectly what is moſt conducive

to

thoſe Purpoſes, may ſee it expedient ſometime to permit the Righteous to be moleſted and injured. Which brings me to the Conſideration of that which makes the Expoſition of the Words of St. *Peter* complete, and puts the Obſervation raiſed from them out of all Debate, *viz.*

III. The following of that which is good, the fearing God and walking in his Ways, tho it doth not always mollify the Hearts, nor manacle the Hands of Men; and ſo far defend the Righteous, as to reſtrain the Ungodly from wronging them; yet it doth that which is much better, *viz.* it turns the greateſt Injuries of their moſt deadly Enemies to their Profit and Advantage. Which Effect it produceth ſometime in their temporal, but always in their ſpiritual and eternal Intereſts. Agreeably to which Truth, the Words of St. *Peter* may be expounded after this Manner; " *Who is he that* " *will harm you, if ye be Followers of that which* " *is good?* While ye heartily devote your ſelves " to the Practice of Righteouſneſs, your moſt " powerful and malicious Adverſaries ſhall not " be able to inflict upon you any Evil, which " by the Mercy and Providence of your hea- " venly Father ſhall not determine in your " Comfort and greater Good.

The Apoſtle St. *Paul* ſpeaks of this, as of a Truth of the moſt evident and unqueſtionable Certainty, *Rom.* viii. 28. *We know that all Things work together for good to them that love*

God, to them who are the called according to his Purpoſe. Which comfortable Aſſertion of the happy Reſult of all Matters and Occurrences to the Godly, is chiefly to be underſtood of Perſecutions and Croſſes.

Now that the Evils and Injuſtice which the Children of God meet with from Men, particularly in their following of that which is good, are converted to their Advantage in their temporal Concerns, we have many pregnant Inſtances, out of which I ſhall ſelect the following.

The Brethren of *Joſeph*, by a barbarous and moſt unnatural Cruelty, ſold him to the *Iſhmaelitiſh* Merchants, with a Deſign to elude his Dreams, and wreak their own Revenge on him; becauſe of their Father's ſingular Affection to him, and his own ſingular Vertue. And the lewd Miſtreſs of the ſame *Joſeph*, more admirable for his Piety than Beauty, becauſe he would not comply with her vile Deſires, provoked her Husband, through Calumny and falſe Accuſation, to ſhut him up in Priſon. Yet thoſe very great Afflictions and Injuries, however they naturally threatned, and were by the Authors of them maliciouſly deſigned for *Joſeph*'s Ruin, turned about, by the ſurpriſing and adorable Conduct of Divine Providence, to his extraordinary Honour and Proſperity. For by theſe aukward and improbable Means, governed by the wiſe God, *Joſeph* came to be the greateſt Man in the Kingdom

of

of *Egypt*, and the glorious Inſtrument of preſerving the Life of his venerable Father, and of his Brethren, and of much People.

Like unto this was the Reſult of the Perſecution of thoſe three honeſt Courtiers, and valiant Confeſſors, whom I have already named in this Diſcourſe, *Shadrach*, *Meſhach* and *Abed-nego*. They were at the Command of *Nebuchadnezzar*, thrown into the midſt of the fiery Furnace, becauſe they nobly refuſed to ſerve his Gods, or worſhip the golden Image he had ſet up. In that dreadful Juncture, the true God in whom they truſted, honoured them with his Preſence, he looſed their Bonds, walked with them through the Fire, and brought them out of it ſafe and untouched. By which amazing Miracle, God ſo touched the Heart of *Nebuchadnezzar*, that, as it is written, *Dan.* iii. ult. *He promoted* Shadrach, Meſhach *and* Abed-nego, *in the Province of* Babylon: The King advanced them to greater Dignity and Power, than that which he had formerly conferred upon them.

But however the infinitely wiſe God may ſometimes ſuffer the Enemies of the Followers of that which is good, to harm them in their temporal Intereſts, to uſe Violence towards their Perſons, to reproach their Names, invade their Poſſeſſions, and treat them many ways moſt injuriouſly: Yet in ſome Senſe it may be ſaid, namely with regard to the Event and Iſſue,

that they, the Enemies of the Righteous, do them no Hurt or Damage, becauſe, tho no Thanks to them for it, the Evil they do to the Servants of God, ends in their exceedingly greater Good.

'Tis with a ſpecial Reſpect to this Obſervation, concerning the happy Concluſion of all thoſe Injuries and Perſecutions with which Men may afflict the Righteous, that St. *Paul* pronounces thoſe memorable Words which I have already quoted from his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, viii. 28. *We know that all Things work together for good to them who love God.* All theſe Evils and Calamities, which the Friends of God, or Followers of that which is good, may at any time ſuffer by the Injuſtice and Cruelty of their Perſecutors, ſhall by the Grace and Mercy of God turn in the Reſult or Upſhot to their inexpreſſible Advantage; by working in them *the peaceable Fruits of Righteouſneſs* in this Life, and for them in the next, *an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.* Thus the Impriſonment of their Bodies contributes to the farther Enlargement and Freedom of their Minds, the Defeats and Slavery of thoſe greaten the Empire and Victories of theſe. If the Righteous, for following of that which is good, are robbed of an earthly Treaſure, they gain an Heavenly one. If they are reviled and deſpiſed by Men, they are praiſed and honoured by God. Their outward Pain and Trouble is com-

compenſated with inward Pleaſure and Indolence, and their Sorrow from the World by the Comforts of the holy Ghoſt. The Fleſh loſeth Ground, and the Spirit gains it in the pious perſecuted Chriſtian; and he hath the bleſſed Occaſion and Means put into his Hands of exerciſing and cultivating the Graces of Faith, Hope and Charity, Patience, Meekneſs, Humility, Devotion and Dependence upon God, of growing in Grace and the Knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. In a Word, theſe Injuries which the Cruelty of wicked Men heaps upon the true and patient Chriſtian, the conſtant and ſerious Follower of that which is good, do infallibly determine in his inward ſpiritual Welfare here, and his eternal and inconceivable Felicity hereafter. His Croſs paves the Way, and moſt effectually contributes to the Beauty, the Riches, the Liberty, the Peace, the Joy and the bettering and improving of his Soul every way in this Life, and to the moſt illuſtrious Glory and Brightneſs of his Crown, in that Life that ſhall never have an End.

I ſhun to inſiſt any longer upon this Argument, there being ſo much Occaſion for proving and explaining it in the following Diſcourſes: Only from the little we have ſaid about it, we plainly ſee the Truth of what I had affirmed concerning the advantagious and bleſſed Reſult to the Righteous, of all thoſe Injuries, with which their moſt malicious and

powerful Enemies may afflict them. The Conſideration whereof, and of the ſeveral Branches of the precedent Diſcourſe, will, I hope, convince us of the Truth of the Doctrine I raiſed from the Text, namely, That the Righteous, in the ſincere, uniform and conſtant Practice of Righteouſneſs, are ſecured againſt Injury and Wrong. And ſo, what now remains to be done, is, to improve this comfortable Doctrine by thoſe profitable Inferences, which may be drawn from it.

1. *Firſt*, We are informed from the Truth already cleared, of the moſt certain, the moſt innocent and laudable Method of ſecuring our ſelves and our Intereſts againſt Oppreſſion and Wrong; *viz.* The ſincere following of that which is good. Self-preſervation and Deſire of Safety is a very natural and univerſal Principle: But the Children of Men do commonly miſtake their Meaſures in the Purſuit thereof. The moſt lay the whole Streſs of their Security upon humane Policy and Power, or the Aid of ſecond Cauſes, with the neglect of the firſt: And too many, alas! *make Lies their Refuge*, have Recourſe to ſinful and diſingenuous Practices, as Perjury, Diſſimulation, Unrighteouſneſs, wicked Compliances, and Apoſtacy from the Truth, or their Duty. But tho the Uſe of lawful Means, in a Dependence upon God, be allowed, yea injoined; and tho the Ways of Falſhood and Wickedneſs may ſucceed: Yet

the

the moſt hopeful and bleſſed Expedient for Safety, either to a Perſon or People, is the ſerious Practice of Righteouſneſs.

To this Purpoſe we may apply theſe Words of *Iſaiah* xxxii. 17, 18. *The Work of Righteouſneſs ſhall be Peace, and the Effect of Righteouſneſs, Quietneſs and Aſſurance for ever. And my People ſhall dwell in a peaceable Habitation, and in ſure Dwellings, and in quiet Reſting-places.* And again, the ſame Prophet, ſpeaking of the Upright, ſays, *He ſhall dwell on high, his Place of Defence ſhall be the Munition of Rocks,* *Iſ.* xxxiii. 16. And *Prov.* xviii, 10. *The Name of the Lord is a ſtrong Tower: The Righteous runneth into it, and is ſafe.* True Piety ſecures Men of the Protection of Almighty God, whoſe undoubted and ſole Prerogative it is to give Peace and Safety. For *to him*, as the Scripture ſpeaks, *Salvation belongeth; and beſide him there is no Saviour.* *Pſ.* iii. 8. *Iſ.* xliii. 11. 'Tis God who by his own eſſential and irreſiſtible Omnipotence can defend his Friends againſt the united Force of all created Wiſdom and Power; and, at the ſame time, render theſe utterly ineffectual to ſuch as place their Confidence in them.

2. *Secondly*, Seeing God hath taken the Followers of that which is good under his Protection, and graciouſly aſſured them, that, ſo far as may agree with the Deſigns of his own Providence, and their greateſt Advantage, they

ſhall

ſhall be ſafe from Oppreſſion and Harm: This ſhould fill their Hearts with Joy and Courage, and baniſh from them ſinful and diſquieting Sadneſs and Fear; even then when their Enemies are moſt ſpiteful and powerful. In that Day the Righteous may ſing *Iſaiah*'s Song, xxvi. 1. *We have a ſtrong City, Salvation will God appoint for Walls and Bulwarks.* And they will find it reaſonable to obey the Exhortation of the Pſalmiſt, *Pſ.* v. 11. 12. *Let all thoſe that put their Truſt in thee rejoyce: Let them ever ſhout for Joy; becauſe thou defendeſt them: Let them alſo that love thy Name be joyful in thee. For thou, Lord, wilt bleſs the Righteous, with Favour wilt thou compaſs him as with a Shield.*

'*David* firmly believing this encouraging and ſupporting Truth, thought it below him to fear, and far more to deſpair, when his Enemies threatned and purſued him with the fierceſt Rage, and the greateſt Multitudes and Power, *Pſ.* xxvii. 1, 2, 3. *The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom ſhall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my Life, of whom ſhall I be afraid? Tho an Hoſt ſhould encamp againſt me, my Heart ſhall not fear: Tho War ſhould riſe againſt me, in this will I be confident.* And again, when *Abſolom*, that Monſter of Uſurpation, Impiety and Ingratitude, roſe up againſt him; when all the Tribes of *Iſrael* were in the Intereſt of this his unnatural Son, and when many thought his Caſe abſolutely forlorn and

delpe-

deſperate, *That there was no Help for him in God*; then in thoſe moſt diſmal Circumſtances, he expreſſes the firmeſt Aſſurance and Tranquillity of Mind, from the Conſideration, that God was his *Shield:* And ſays with the boldeſt Reſolution and Intrepidity, *I will not be afraid of ten Thouſands of People, that have ſet themſelves againſt me round about. Pſ.* iii.

3. *Thirdly*, That Conſolation which the Words of the Text, and the Doctrine raiſed from them, yield to the ſincerely good and righteous Man, is much enhanſed and improved; while he conſiders that the greateſt Injuries and Evils with which the Wicked afflict the Righteous, are turned by the ſovereign Providence and Grace of God to their Benefit and Welfare, ſometime in their temporal, and always in their ſpiritual and eternal Intereſts. This ſtrongly ſupports and encourages the ingenuous conſtant Follower of that which is good, in the midſt of all theſe Calamities with which he finds himſelf ſurrounded and aggrieved by the Wrath and Malice of Men. For he learns from it, that his heavenly Father can aggrandize or glorify his own Wiſdom and Power, in making the Rage of Men, and the direſt Effects thereof, to be the very Means and Inſtruments of his Deliverance, and of his greateſt outward Honour and Proſperity: Or, however it may fare with him in this Reſpect, yet he infallibly knows that the moſt deſtructive Perſecutions

ſecutions of Men *work together for good* to him in the moſt excellent Senſe ; that is, ſo far as concerns the Welfare of his Soul in this World, and that both of Soul and Body in that World which is to come. O how comfortable is it to the pious, honeſt and virtuous Man, under all his Oppreſſions and Sufferings, to be aſſured that they will unqueſtionably end in his Profit and Joy one Way or other, and that maugre all the Endeavours of Hell and Earth to the contrary!

4. *Fourthly*, Since the Safety of our Perſons and Intereſts from Oppreſſion and Violence lies chiefly in the following of that which is good ; it ſhould endear unto us Religion and Vertue, and powerfully diſſuade us from Ungodlineſs and Vice. There are many Sins which expoſe the Committers of them to the Revenge of their Neighbours and the Juſtice of the Magiſtrate : And every ſinful Courſe provokes the Diſpleaſure of God ; ſo that while Men walk in wicked ways, they are out of the Road of Security. Accordingly we may obſerve, that when the Children of *Iſrael* adhered unto God, to the Purity of his Worſhip, and the Obſervance of his Laws, they were ſafe from foreign Invaſion, and Oppreſſion at Home. But when they forſook God and his Commandments, then they became an eaſy Prey to all Invaders ; and *there was no Peace to him who went out, nor to him who came in*; and then they found the Truth of what

what *Hoſea* foretels, viii. 3. Iſrael *hath caſt off the Thing that is good: The Enemy ſhall purſue him.* Thus it is remarkable, that when *Moſes* expoſtulates with *Aaron* upon his having made the Golden Calf, he chides him for the great Injury he had done the Children of *Iſrael*, in yielding to their Deſires in that Matter, *Exod.* xxxiii. 21. *What did this People unto thee, that thou haſt brought ſo great a Sin upon them?* Thou haſt treated them like a moſt provoked and vindictive Enemy. The Reaſon of which Charge is given in the 25th Verſe, *Becauſe* by their Sin they became *naked unto their Shame amongſt their Enemies*: That is, they did thereby ſtrip themſelves of their Glory, their Armour and Safe-gard, *viz.* the Divine Favour and Protection.

But as we learn in the general from the Truth which hath been explained, that Wickedneſs and Impiety are no Friends to Mens Security; ſo in particular we ſee the Folly of thoſe who betake themſelves on any Occaſion to ſinful and unrighteous Meaſures for their Preſervation and Deliverance. For in the Words of the Text, the Promiſe of Safety is plainly made to the *Followers of that which is good*, in Excluſion of ſuch as follow that which is evil, or turn aſide to crooked Ways. Would to God Men did ſeriouſly conſider, that however ſometime in the unſearchable Wiſdom and high Indignation of God, wicked Courſes may

be

be ſuffered to proſper for a little; that yet in themſelves they are abominable and pernicious, void not only of Religion, but Prudence. For they highly provoke the holy and omnipotent God, who ſtands not in need of our Lies to advance his Intereſts, who is the declared Enemy of ſuch Practices, and reckons himſelf extremely diſhonoured by them, and who, as he can blaſt and overturn them at his Pleaſure, ſo many Times he hath actually done it, to the Confuſion and Shame of thoſe who truſted in them. *Iſ.* xxx. 1. *Wo to the rebellious Children, ſaith the Lord, that take Counſel, but not of me; and that cover with a Covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add Sin to Sin.*

5. *Fifthly*, Since the harming of thoſe who are the Followers of that which is good, is ſo abſurd and unreaſonable in it ſelf, and ſuch a perfect Contradiction unto God, who is the great Author, Pattern and Patron of Holineſs and Vertue: This ſhould make Men both aſhamed and afraid to be guilty thereof. What can be more unjuſt, than to injure the innocent and kind, or more impious and fooliſh, than to be Adverſaries to thoſe who are the dear Favourites of God. As Jeſus Chriſt eſteems himſelf perſecuted in the Sufferings of his Friends, and reckons that they who *touch them, touch the Apple of his Eye*: So their Perſecutors will find at length, that *it is hard for them to kick againſt the Pricks, to provoke the Lord, who is ſtronger*

ſtronger than they, when they ſee that *their violent Dealing* recoils upon themſelves, that *they have ſpread a Net for their own Feet, and digged a Pit into which themſelves are fallen.*

6. And *laſtly*, Tho they, who after ſerious Examination of their Ways ſee their own Uprightneſs, need not ſuſpect the ſame becauſe of thoſe Evils and Harms they meet with from the World: Yet Perſecution, as all other Afflictions do, fairly invites us to ſearch and try our Hearts and Behaviour, that ſo we may know, whether or not by our turning aſide from that which is good, we have provoked God to expoſe us to the Spite and Violence of Men. Alas! we frequently by our Sins raiſe thoſe Storms and Troubles which annoy us, and the Righteous themſelves, becauſe of ſome Miſcarriages and crooked Steps, are left in the Hands of the Wicked. Ah! how often do they who own a good Cauſe, hurt it, and retard their own Deliverance by wicked Practices, and lengthen out their Oppreſſion and Miſery by thoſe carnal Counſels and Methods, by which they had vainly thought to ſhorten them. It will therefore be a pious and wiſe Courſe for Chriſtians, in the melancholy Seaſon, when *Men ride over their Heads*, and laſh their Backs with their Rods, to conſider impartially whether or not they have *put forth their Hands to Iniquity*: And upon the Knowledge of this, to return to the ſincere and uniform Practice of Righteouſneſs;

and

and then they may promiſe themſelves Security from Injury and Wrong, ſo far as it ſhall be moſt expedient for advancing Gods Glory, and their greateſt Advantage. For the Apoſtle St. *Peter* hath ſaid, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be Followers of that which is good?*

Now to the only wiſe and Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt, the Lover and Protector of Righteouſneſs, be Glory and Praiſe for ever and ever. Amen.

DIS-

DISCOURSE II.

1. PETER III. 14.

But and if ye ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, happy are ye.

THE Apoſtle St. *Peter*, having in the foregoing Verſe repreſented the Safety of the good and righteous Man from the Injuries of the World, ſuppoſes in the Beginning of the Words which we have read, that it may happen to be otherwiſe; that the Followers of that which is good, the conſtant Profeſſors of the Truths of the Goſpel, and Obſervers of its Precepts, may fall into Perſecution for that very Reaſon. And then that ſuch excellent Perſons might be furniſhed both with Encouragement and Direction, in ſuch a Juncture, he firſt aſſerts their Bleſſedneſs in the latter Part of the Text, and afterwards offers them very pious and uſeful Inſtructions for regulating their Behaviour in the State of Perſecution.

And now, Friends, I am ſenſible that this Aſſertion, concerning the Happineſs of theſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, will be readily eſteemed the greateſt Contradiction and

Falſhood, by carnal and vicious Men, who are full of the Love of this preſent World, who reliſh Satisfaction in nothing, but what gratifies their Luſts and ſenſual Deſires, and meaſure their Happineſs by its Agreeableneſs thereunto. And perhaps at firſt reading this Saying of St. *Peter* may have to ſome of a better Temper and Diſpoſition, the Appearance of a Paradox; and they may think it ſtrange, that Suffering and Happineſs ſhould conſiſt together, and Beatitude adorn the Scene of tragical Horror: Yet upon ſerious Enquiry, the Truth of what is affirmed in this Matter, will ſhine with the brighteſt Evidence and Light.

But before I lay down the Grounds, upon which the Felicity of thoſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs is moſt firmly eſtabliſhed; it will not be amiſs, to prevent the fooliſh Preſumption of ſuch, who without a juſt Title may pretend thereunto.

1. And here in the *1ſt* Place, tho to ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, when the divine Providence calls thereunto, be a Duty from which no Perſon whatſoever is excuſed; and that to endure Hardſhip for owning the Truths of Jeſus Chriſt, or the Performance of any of his Commandments, from a Senſe and Conſcience of Duty, be in ſome manner advantagious and praiſe-worthy, even in ſuch who are not uniformly righteous: Yet we are bound to declare that the Happineſs aſſigned by the Apoſtle to the ſuffering for Righteouſneſs ſake, be-

belongs, in its full and complete Senſe, only to theſe who are otherwiſe in their Life and Practice *the Followers of that which is good*, or are truly pious and holy. So that, to deal plainly, they who are vicious and wicked, Men of unrenewed Hearts, and immoral Lives, are not the Perſons to whom Bleſſedneſs is promiſed by St. *Peter*, upon the Suppoſition of ſuffering for Righteouſneſs. And this eſpecially holds true, if their enduring of evil, tho in a good Cauſe, proceed not from the Senſe of their Duty, or Reſpect to the Glory and Will of God, but from Stiffneſs of Humour, or a Regard only to their worldly Honour or Deſigns.

This is clear from the Tenor of the Scripture, the preſent Diſcourſe of St. *Peter* upon this Subject, and from the plaineſt Reaſon. The Acceptableneſs of thoſe Duties we perform unto God, depends, through the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt, upon the Holineſs of our Perſons, the Sincerity of our Intentions, and the exerciſing of Faith and Love while we are employed in them. And the Defect of theſe Conditions, makes our Actions, tho otherwiſe very ſpecious and materially good, to be of no Account with God: *The Sacrifice of the Wicked*, ſaith *Solomon*, *Prov.* xxi. 27. *is Abomination; how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked Mind?* which very juſtly may be affirmed of his Sufferings, when attended with the like Circumſtances. And the Apoſtle St. *Paul* ſays peremptorily, that the

greateſt Sufferings are ineffectual to the Salvation of him who is void of the Love of God and his Neighbour: *Tho I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing*, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 3. Thus St. *Peter*, purſuing this important Theme, amongſt the reſt of his excellent Advices he recommends to the ſuffering Chriſtian the having of a good Conſcience. And concluding that Argument, ſays, *Wherefore, let them that ſuffer according to the Will of God, commit the keeping of their Souls to him in well-doing.* And finally, it is very obſervable, that before our bleſſed Lord, *Matth.* v. 10. aſſerts the Bleſſedneſs of thoſe *who are perſecuted for Righteouſneſs ſake*; he firſt aſcertains Felicity to ſuch who are endued with the gracious Diſpoſitions of Soul mentioned by him in the foregoing Verſes: Thereby inſinuating, that the Bleſſedneſs of thoſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, ſuppoſeth that they are poſſeſt of theſe Graces and Virtues. Were it not highly unreaſonable, for unſanctified, unregenerate Perſons, ſuch as live in the habitual Neglect of Religion and Piety, and in ſinful Courſes and Practices, to expect, that their ſuffering for any particular Truth or Duty, would apologize for their unmortified Luſts, ſave them from the Wrath of God threatned againſt their other ungodly Ways, or procure for them that Happineſs of which their Wickedneſs not repented of renders them incapable? Therefore,

may

may all they whoſe Lot it is, or ſhall be, to ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, for confeſſing any of the Truths of God, or obſerving any of his Laws, be every way the ſincere Followers of that which is good. May their Perſons be ſanctified, their Lives holy, and their Intention pure; that ſo they may have a clear and unqueſtionable Title to the Happineſs promiſed to the Sufferers for the ſake of Righteouſneſs. What a Pity were it, that any of thoſe who have the Courage to ſuffer for Religion in the general, or for any of the particular Truths or Duties thereof, ſhould by their ſinful Practices otherwiſe, and their ſiniſter Deſigns, forego this glorious Felicity?

2. *Secondly*, As they are the truly Righteous who have an Intereſt in the Happineſs aſſured unto thoſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake: So they who ſuffer really for Righteouſneſs, for their Innocency, Vertue, and conſtant Fidelity to the Truths and Precepts of Jeſus Chriſt; are the only Perſons whom the Apoſtle pronounces happy in the State of Perſecution. If Men ſuffer for Errour inſtead of Truth, for Sin inſtead of Duty, for that which is not only called ſo, but is truly Hereſy, Schiſm, Faction, Sedition, Rebellion, Unrighteouſneſs: If thus, I ſay, Men by their own Folly and Miſcarriages, their blind & unwarranted Zeal, or their Crimes and evil Deeds, bring Sufferings upon themſelves; then, in theſe Caſes, they have no Title

to the Bleſſedneſs mentioned in the Text. As this is clear from the Words of the Text it ſelf, which expreſly connect Suffering and Righteouſneſs: So likewiſe it is evident from other Places of Scripture. Thus our bleſſed Saviour, encouraging his Diſciples againſt the Injuries and Reproaches that ſhould be heaped upon them for his Sake, ſuppoſes that they, by their Miſcarriages and Faults, ſhould give no Occaſion thereunto, *Matth.* v. 11. *Bleſſed are ye when Men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſhall ſay all Manner of Evil againſt you falſly for my ſake.* Our Apoſtle ſeems to be much concerned in the declaring of this Truth, and therefore aſſerts it frequently, and warns Believers that they may not by their Raſhneſs and Sins precipitate themſelves into Suffering, 1 *Pet.* ii. 19, 20. *This is thank-worthy, if a Man for Conſcience toward God endure Grief, ſuffering wrongfully. For what Glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your Faults, ye ſhall take it patiently? But if when ye do well, and ſuffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God.* 2 *Pet.* iii. 17. *It is better, if the Will of God be ſo, that ye ſuffer for Well-doing, than for Evil-doing.* And once more, *v.* 15. of the following Chapter, *Let none of you ſuffer as a Murderer, or as a Thief, or as an Evil-doer, or as a Buſy-body in other Mens Matters.* But this is a Truth that carrys along with it its own Evidence: For if Men ſuffer the Evil of Puniſhment for their

evil

evil Deeds, they in that Caſe juſtly deſerve what they ſuffer, they are rather Criminals than Martyrs, and inſtead of being happy in theſe Circumſtances, they are doubly miſerable, firſt by their Sin, and then by its Puniſhment. Now the reflecting upon this ſhould oblige Men very ſeriouſly and impartially to examine the Grounds and Reaſons of thoſe Tenets and Practices for mhich they ſuffer : Leſt, if they be wofully miſtaken about them, that confounding Queſtion be put to them in the End, *Who hath required theſe Things at your Hand* ?

Theſe neceſſary Limitations being premiſed, I come to demonſtrate the Truth of this comfortable Aſſertion, That the righteous Man is happy, when he ſuffers for Righteouſneſs ſake ; *But and if ye ſuffer for Righteouſneſ ſake, happy are ye,* Now this will plainly appear from the following Reaſons and Grounds.

Firſt, The patient Suffering for Righteouſneſs ſake, is a yielding Obedience to one of the Commandments of Jeſus Chriſt, the Obſervance whereof he requires of all his Diſciples ; and that for no leſs Conſiderations than theſe, that upon the doing thereof depends the Truth of their Chriſtianity in this Life, and their Salvation in the next.

Secondly, The cheerful enduring of theſe Contradictions and Evils which befal the Chriſtian in profeſſing the Truths of God, and obeying his Laws, is an Inſtance of the moſt he-

roick and undaunted Vertue, and a happy Proof of the Sincerity of his Piety and Faith; while the other Parts of his Deportment do not give him juſt Ground to fear the contrary.

Thirdly, The Chriſtian's being called out into a State of Perſecution, and his valiant enduring of the ſame, is a bleſſed Indication of God's ſpecial Love unto him, and Eſteem of his Fortitude and Uprightneſs.

Fourthly, As God lovingly calleth true Chriſtians to the Honour of Suffering for his Name; ſo he graciouſlly reckons himſelf to be honoured by their religious Courage and Fidelity in the doing thereof.

Fifthly, The conſtant Integrity of the good and pious Man, under all his Sufferings for Righteouſneſs, creates in him that inward Pleaſure and Peace of Mind, which is the natural Effect, of Holineſs and Vertue, and of the Soul's being conſcious to it ſelf of its own Innocency; and likewiſe it obtains for him thoſe gratuitous and ſupernatural Joys, which in the Hour of Temptation flow in from the Holy Ghoſt the Comforter upon the Heart of the Sufferer.

Sixthly, That which is a very conſiderable Proof of the Bleſſedneſs of theſe who endure, in the Spirit of Patience and Penitence, thoſe Sufferings which occur unto them in the way of their Duty; they powerfully contribute to purify their Souls from remaining Corruption, and to perfect them into the higheſt Degrees of Holineſs.

Laſtly

Laſtly, That which, without the poſſibility of a reaſonable Contradiction, clears and completes the Evidence, for the Truth of the Happineſs of thoſe pious and religious Ones, who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake; Is, that they are ſecured of the Bleſſedneſs of Heaven, and that in the greateſt Portion and Degree; which is a Reward ſo great in it ſelf, and ſo unalterably inſured to the conſtant and pious Sufferer, that tho it be future, yet with reſpect to it, St. *Peter* might very well ſay in the preſent Tenſe, *Ye are happy.*

I. *Firſt*, The patient Suffering for Righteouſneſs ſake, is the giving Obedience to one of the Commandments of Jeſus Chriſt, the Obſervance whereof he requires of all his Diſciples; and that upon no leſs important Conſiderations than theſe, that upon the doing thereof depends the Truth of their Chriſtianity in this Life, and their Salvation in the next.

This is clearly proved from that ſolemn and never to be forgotten Diſcourſe of our Lord and Maſter, to which the preſumptuous Behaviour of *Peter* gave Occaſion, which ye find recorded very exactly by St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark*, *Matth.* xvi. from the 21. *Verſe* to the End of the Chapter, *Mark* viii. from *Ver.* xxxi. to the Cloſe. There ye have an Account that Jeſus began to ſhew unto his Diſciples, *That he muſt ſuffer many Things, and be rejected of the Elders, and of the chief Prieſts and Scribes,*

and

and be killed: And that *Peter* upon the hearing thereof, ſo far forgot the Reverence he owed his Maſter, and was hitherto ſo little acquainted with the Deſigns of God with a Reſpect unto him, That *he took him, and began to rebuke him, ſaying, Be it far from thee, Lord: This ſhall not be unto thee.* By which daring Treatment and unſeaſonable Advice, the meek and holy Jeſus is ſo juſtly provoked, that he expreſſes his Abhorrence thereof by Words full of the higheſt Indignation and Reſentment; *But he turned, and ſaid unto* Peter, *get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an Offence unto me: For thou ſavoureſt not the Things that be of God, but thoſe that be of Men.* And then Jeſus taking Occaſion from this Miſcarriage of *Peter*, in adviſing him to decline his approaching Sufferings, He calleth unto him not only his Diſciples, but the whole Multitude of the People, thereby teaching us of how great and univerſal Concernment the following Diſcourſe was to be: And then he ſolemnly proclaims the abſolute Neceſſity that lies upon all his Diſciples without Exception, *to take up the Croſs* for his Sake, and to adhere to Him and Righteouſneſs, tho by the doing thereof they ſhould incur the greateſt Dangers and Inconveniences from the World. And he aſſures them, that upon the diſowning of him and his Truths, he would diſown them now to be his Diſciples, and would be aſhamed of them when he ſhould

come

come in the Glory of his Father; and that they ſhould by denying him loſe their Souls for ever. We learn all this very plainly from the Words of our Lord in the Evangeliſts which I have cited, and I intreat you ſeriouſly to read and conſider them.

If there be any who deſire an Addition to ſo plain and ample a Teſtimony to the Truth I deſigned to prove thereby, let them conſider the Words of the ſame infallible Jeſus, *Matth.* x. 38, 38. *He that loveth Father or Mother more than me, is not worthy of me,* &c. *And he that taketh not his Croſs, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* And *Luke* xiv. 26. *If any Man come to me, and hate not his Father and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Siſters, yea and his own Life alſo, he cannot be my Diſciple.* And now they who value their being the faithful Diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt, and the having an Intereſt in their Reward, will, I think, preſently ſee the Force of this Argument, for proving the Happineſs of theſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake.

II. *Secondly*, That which contributes to prove the Bleſſedneſs of the perſecuted Chriſtian, is this; The cheerful enduring of thoſe Contradictions and Evils, which befal him in profeſſing the Truths of God, and obeying his Commandments, is an Inſtance of the moſt heroick and undaunted Vertue, and a happy Proof of the ſincerity of his Piety and Faith.

To own the Doctrines and Purity of the Chriſtian Religion, is always ſeaſonable and good; to be Vertuous and Holy is in all Conjunctures praiſe-worthy; But to be Orthodox and Faithful, when that's a mortal Crime, to adhere to Chriſt and the Croſs together, cheerfully to part with Friends, Relatives, Houſes, Lands, Benefices, Reputation, Country, Liberty, yea, Life it ſelf, when theſe and a good Conſcience cannot be preſerved, is undoubtedly the Exerciſing of Grace and Holineſs in the moſt eminent Manner and Degree, the exerting the moſt fervent Love to God and Men, the firmeſt Fidelity to our Lord, the ſtrongeſt Faith, and the greateſt Contempt of the World. It is the moſt glorious Victory over our ſelves, our own Paſſions and Fears, and that natural Inclination which prompts us to ſecure our Life and the Conveniences thereof. This is bravely to *reſiſt unto Blood*, to be *valiant for the Truth*, to *ſtand faſt in the Faith*, and to *quit our ſelves like Men*. An Inſtance of that Patience of Spirit and Magnanimity which enable us to ſtand upright under the heavieſt Load of Adverſity, and boldly to look Death it ſelf in the Face, and to *take the Kingdom of Heaven by Violence*.

And this Patience under the Croſs doth, as I have ſaid already, afford the Sufferer for Righteouſneſs, a happy Proof of the Sincerity of his Piety and Faith; while the other Parts of his Deportment do not give him juſt Grounds to

dread

dread the contrary. In the calm and pleaſant Seaſon of outward Tranquillity and Peace, when worldly Honour and Proſperity attend the Practice of Religion and the profeſſing of its Truths, and when Hereſy and Wickedneſs are capital or dangerous Crimes by the Laws of Men; then it is no great Matter tho we confeſs the Doctrines of Jeſus Chriſt, and pay an external Conformity to his Precepts: And in this favourable Juncture, we may be tempted to queſtion the Solidity and Candour of our Profeſſion and Practice, whether with the Multitude we do not follow Chriſt for the ſake of the Loaves. At leaſt, tho our own Minds bear us Witneſs of our preſent Integrity and Zeal, we are at ſome Uncertainty, what our Behaviour would be, *if Perſecution* ſhould *ariſe for the Word*; for *the Heart of Man is deceitful above all Things and deſperately wicked, who can know it?* Many who have ſignally adhered to the Truth and their Duty in the time of publick Encouragement, have ſhamefully fallen in the Day of Perſecution and Trial. Thus *Peter*, as confident as he was of his own Fortitude, yet alas! when Danger preſented it ſelf, he cowardly retired, and to eſcape the Fate of his Maſter, he with Oaths and Imprecations denied the knowledge of him. Whereas upon the other Hand, the conſtant and joyful ſuffering of theſe Injuries we may meet with in adhering to our Duty, we being otherwiſe

inno-

innocent in our Lives, removes thoſe uneaſy Suſpicions and Fears about our ſpiritual Eſtate, and yields us a conſiderable Proof of the Truth of the Grace of God in us. St. *Paul* writing to the *Romans*, v. *Chap.* 3, 4 and 5 *Verſes*, bears Witneſs both to the Truth of what I am proving, and to the Uſefulneſs thereof for clearing the Thing we are conteſting for, the Happineſs of the ſuffering Chriſtian; *We glory in Tribulations*, we triumphantly rejoyce in them, *knowing that Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience Experience, and Experience Hope; and Hope maketh not aſhamed.* " *i. e.* Sufferings for Chriſts ſake exerciſe our Patience; " that continuing firm under the Croſs, yields " the comforting Trial of our Sincerity; that " being cleared, founds the joyful Expectation " of future Glory; and that well grounded " Hope ſhall never be diſappointed.

Now they who ſeriouſly conſider the Reaſon which I have laſt explained for proving the Happineſs of theſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, will acknowledge the Uſefulneſs thereof to that Purpoſe; when they conſider, that Holineſs is the greateſt Perfection of their Souls, and that upon the Truth and Sincerity thereof, through Jeſus Chriſt, their Title to eternal Felicity depends: And conſequently their knowing by ſure and bleſſed Experience, that they themſelves are Holy and Righteous, muſt yield and occaſion to them

the

the moſt comfortable and refreſhing Thoughts, and ſo far make them Happy.

III. *Thirdly*, The Chriſtian's being engaged in the ſtate of Perſecution, and his valiant enduring of the ſame, is a happy Indication of God's ſpecial Favour unto him, and Eſteem of his Fortitude and Uprightneſs. The al-wiſe God frequently calls forth unto the bloody Warfare of Perſecution his choſen and well-beloved Servants and Friends, whoſe ſingular Conſtancy and Zeal he knows, and for whom he deſigns the higheſt Degrees of future Glory and Happineſs. God, I ſay, calls forth theſe his Champions and Favourites into the moſt grievous Afflictions and Sufferings for his Sake, that ſo he may publickly applaud, and ſhew to the World their diſtinguiſhing and inſuperable Patience, Faith, Courage and Integrity, and thus lay a Foundation for their ſignal and extraordinary Reward in that Kingdom which is above. Thus the Lord Jeſus ſpeaking in a Viſion to *Ananias* of *Saul*, of whom that good Man was afraid, ſays, *Act.* ix. 15, 16. *He is a choſen Veſſel unto me, to bear my Name before the Gentiles and Kings, and the Children of Iſrael. For I will ſhew him how great Things he muſt ſuffer for my Names ſake.* Suitably to this we have the plain and concurring Teſtimony of two great Apoſtles St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*. The firſt fortifying theſe to whom he writes againſt Perſecution in the way of their Duty, adviſes thus, 1 *Pet.* iv.

iv. 16. *If any Man ſuffer as a Chriſtian, let him not be aſhamed, but let him glorify God on this Behalf.* "Let him extol and laud him, for "ſuch a ſingular Inſtance of his Favour and "Grace, in employing him ſo honourably, as "to endure Affliction for his Sake". And the latter in his Epiſtle to the *Philippians*, i. 28, 29. hath theſe moſt encouraging Words to ſuch who meet with Evil in the following of that which is good: *And in nothing terrified by your Adverſaries, which is to them an evident Token of Perdition, but to you of Salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Chriſt, not only to believe on him, but alſo to ſuffer for his Sake.* Agreeable to this was the Sentiment and Behaviour of the whole College of the Apoſtles, when, upon the Account of their Fidelity to their deareſt Lord, they were moſt diſgracefully treated by the *Sanhedrim* at *Jeruſalem*, *Acts* v. 40, 41. *They departed from the Preſence of the Council rejoycing that they were counted worthy to ſuffer Shame for his Name.* "They were filled with the higheſt "Joy that their Maſter ſo far approved of their "Honeſty and Courage, and did bear them ſo "much Good-will, as to expoſe them to con-"tumelious Uſage for his Sake.

And now, is not this a conſiderable Ingredient in the Happineſs of theſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake? If it yields a very ſenſible Pleaſure and Satisfaction to a Servant, to obſerve

ſerve that his Maſter hath ſuch a ſpecial Favour to him, and Opinion of his Prudence, Faithfulneſs and Diligence, as to employ him in Affairs of the greateſt Conſequence and Difficulty. Or, if the couragious and aſpiring Soldier reckons himſelf honoured, when his Prince or General ſo far confides in his Loyalty, Conduct and Proweſs, as to ſend him out to the hardeſt Exploits, and aſſign him the moſt dangerous Station: Muſt not then the Heart of the true Chriſtian be affected with the moſt cheering Reflections and Joy, when he finds that his great Lord and Sovereign gives ſo plain a Teſtimony to his Fortitude, Vertue and Piety, and ſo ſignally honours him, as to ſend him out before Angels and Men into the hotteſt Brunt of the Battle, to encounter the *Goliahs*, the moſt cruel and daring Enemies of the Truth, to make Way for himſelf through a Sea of Blood, and preſs valiantly forward to the new *Jeruſalem*, maugre all the Force and Stratagems of Hell and its Adherents. Undoubtedly it is the higheſt Glory of the Chriſtian ſo boldly to give Teſtimony to the Truth, by an undaunted and cheerful Patience and Courage, to fight the Lord's Battles, to partake of the Sufferings of Chriſt, thus bravely to follow the Captain of his Salvation, and advance to Glory in his bloody Footſteps, and to be enrolled into the Number of the noble Army of Martyrs.

IV. *Fourthly*, As God lovingly calls true Chriſtians to the Honour of ſuffering for his Name; ſo he graciouſly reckons himſelf to be honoured by their religious Courage and Fidelity in the doing thereof. In Proof of this the Evangeliſt St. *John*, reflecting upon theſe Words of our Saviour to St. *Peter*, after his Reſurrection, *Verily, verily I ſay unto thee, when thou waſt young, thou girdedſt thy ſelf, and walkedſt whither thou wouldeſt: But when thou ſhalt be old, thou ſhalt ſtretch forth thy hands, and another ſhall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldeſt not*, *John.* xxi, 18. he obſerves in the 19. *v. This ſpake he ſignifying by what Death he ſhould glorifie God.* And accordingly St. *Peter* giving his ſentiment of the Perſecuters of, and the Perſecuted for Righteouſneſs, affirms that God is reproached by thoſe, but honoured by theſe: *On their part he is evil ſpoken of, by on your part he is glorifyed* 1 *Pet.* iv. 14. When we call to mind that in the Scripture we are reckoned *to glorifie God*, when we entertain becoming and honourable Thoughts of Him and his Perfections, and give a ready and unreſerved Obedience to his Commands, and are inſtrumental to promote the Reputation and Practice of Religion amongſt Men; we will eaſily acknowledge, that the ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake is a very remarkable Inſtance of glorifying God. For the good Man ſuffering for God and Religion, makes it evident how great a Reverence and dread

& dread he pays to the ſupreme & omnipotent Lord of the Univerſe, when rather than diſobey him, or incur his formidable Diſpleaſure, he chooſes to expoſe himſelf to the direſt & moſt threatning Wrath of Man. The honeſt Sufferer for the Truth and his Duty, diſcovers how ſtrong and flaming is his Love to God; when the deepeſt Flouds of Adverſity cannot extinguiſh it, and he is ready to lay down his Life in his Behalf. Thus he demonſtrates the mighty Power and Efficacy of divine Grace in his Soul, and the Strength of Faith, whereby he foils and triumphs over Fleſh and Blood, Principalities and Powers, all the Malice of Hell and Earth, and ſets to his Seal to the Truth of a bleſſed Immortality, by forgoing all temporal and worldly Joys in the Hope of it. And finally the holy and conſtant Sufferer uſes his utmoſt Endeavour to eſtabliſh thoſe who may be ready to faint in the Day of Trial, and to aſſure an unbelieving or doubting World of the Truth of the great Principles and Doctrines of our holy Religion.

And now, muſt it not fill, with a very ſatisfying and ſupporting Pleaſure, the Hearts of thoſe pious ones, who endure Affliction for God and his Intereſts, who are zealous for his Glory, and ambitious of being inſtrumental in the advancing thereof, to find that he the moſt exalted and glorious Lord, puts ſuch a Value upon their lame and indebted Service and Fidelity, as

to account himſelf honoured thereby? And thus ſtill we are confirmed in the Truth of what St. *Peter* here aſſerts, *If ye ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, happy are ye.*

V. *Fifthly*, The conſtant Integrity of the good and pious Man, under all his Sufferings for Righteouſneſs, creates in him that inward Pleaſure and Peace of Mind, which is the conſtant and genuine Effect of Holineſs and Vertue, and of the Soul's being conſcious to it ſelf of its own Innocency. And it likewiſe obtains for him theſe gratuitous and ſupernatural Joys and Aſſiſtances, which in the Hour of Temptation flow in from the Holy Ghoſt the Comforter upon the Heart of the perſecuted Chriſtian.

That Cheerfulneſs and Briskneſs of Spirit, which a Man feels from bodily Health and Vigour, is but a faint Reſemblance of that Indolence and Delight, which overſpreads the Soul of the Righteous in the free and conſtant Exerciſe of Holineſs, wherein conſiſts the ſound and healthy Eſtate of their Minds, and whereby they are happily ſecured from thoſe painful Maladies and Wounds which waſte and cruciate the Souls of wicked Men. The Perſon of ſolid and habitual Vertue and Piety, who ſteadily governs his interior and exterior Man, his Deſires, Thoughts and Actions, according to the Rules of Religion and Reaſon, enjoys an admirable Tranquillity and Peace, and to his great Satisfaction finds himſelf free from the horrid

horrid Diſorder, Fury and Tempeſt which rage in the Hearts of thoſe who are under the Tyranny of their Luſts and Paſſions. This Man of Uprightneſs and Integrity, has the Felicity to be ſafe from the dreadful Convulſions and confounding Fears of a guilty Conſcience, and to reflect with unſpeakable Pleaſure and Approbation upon his Ways. He can with great Aſſurance and Delight, through the Mercies of God in Jeſus Chriſt, look inward, backward and forward; inward to his Heart, backward to his Life, and forward to Eternity. In a Word, the ſincere and conſtant Follower of that which is good, who *herein exerciſes himſelf to have always a Conſcience void of Offence toward God and toward Men*; is *ſatisfied from himſelf*, as the wiſe Man obſerves, *Prov.* xiv. 14. He is bleſſed with a continual and home-bred Felicity, with a laſting ſpring of Joy and Satisfaction within his own Breaſt, which exceedingly cheers and encourages him under all his Sufferings and Adverſity from without.

As what I have ſaid to this Purpoſe can be juſtified both from Reaſon and Experience: So the Scripture bears ample Teſtimony thereunto. *David* ſays, *Pſ.* xcvii. 11. *Light is ſown for the Righteous, and Gladneſs for the upright in Heart.* And again, *Great Peace have they that love thy Law*, *Pſ.* cxix. 165. *Solomon*, ſpeaking of Wiſdom, or Piety, affirms, that *her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are*

Peace. This St. *Paul* actually found in himſelf, as he declares, 2 *Cor.* i. 12. *Our rejoycing is this, the Teſtimony of our Conſcience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleſhly Wiſdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our Converſation in the World.* But this is not all the Pleaſure which attends the holy and patient Bearer of the Croſs: For as he hath a clear and ſpecial Intereſt in that Contentment, Quiet and Delight which are the Product and Work of Righteouſneſs, and the Soul's acquieſcing in its own Simplicity and Vertue: So he partakes of thoſe gratuitous and ſupernatural Joys and Aſſiſtances, which in the Hour of Temptation flow in from the Holy Ghoſt the Comforter upon the Heart of the perſecuted Chriſtian. His moſt compaſſionate and bountiful Lord is wont, out of particular Favour unto him, graciouſly to ſuperadd a Royal Largeſs of heavenly Comfort and Aid, to ſupport his Infirmity againſt the Sharpneſs and Violence of his Afflictions. It is to the righteous Man ſuffering for Righteouſneſs that Chriſt fulfils theſe Promiſes in the moſt amazing and glorious Manner, *Bleſſed are they that mourn, for they ſhall be comforted. I will not leave you comfortleſs, I will come to you.* The holy Spirit inſpires the Minds of ſuch Perſons *with Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory, and ſuffers them not to be tempted above what he enables them to bear* by the extraordinary Supports of his Grace. O incomparable Joys! ſufficient

not

not only to ſtrengthen the Chriſtian to carry the Croſs, but even to excite in him the Deſire thereof. Joys which have not only ſweetned to many the bitter Cup of Sufferings, but alſo raiſed in ſome a Thirſt after it. Joys which have wrought in the primitive Chriſtians and others theſe aſtoniſhing and miraculous Effects, as ſinging in the midſt of Flames, ſmiling upon Racks and the moſt dreadful Inſtruments of Torture, their rejecting with Diſdain the Offers of Deliverance upon ſinful Terms, and challenging their inhumane Judges and Executioners to exert their utmoſt Cruelty. The Apoſtle St. *Paul* found himſelf obliged to break out into a Doxology, becauſe of the Experience which he and the reſt of the Faithful had of the adorable Goodneſs and Mercy of God in comforting them in the Time of Perſecution, 2 *Cor.* i. 3, 4, 5. *Bleſſed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort: Who comforteth us in all our Tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any Trouble, by the Comfort wherewith we our ſeves are comforted of God. For as the Sufferings of Chriſt abound in us, ſo our Conſolation alſo aboundeth by Chriſt.* And the ſame Apoſtle, upon the certain Perſwaſion of this, firmly reſolves to reckon the moſt grievous Sufferings for the ſake of his Maſter, to be the Matter of his greateſt Honour and Joy, 2 *Cor.* xii. 9, 10. *Moſt gladly therefore will I rather*

ther glory in my Infirmities, that the Power of Chriſt may reſt upon me. Therefore I take Pleaſure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Neceſſities, in Perſecutions, in Diſtreſſes for Chriſt's ſake: For when I am weak, then am I ſtrong. Finally, upon this Conſideration the Apoſtle St. *Peter* founds the Felicity of the Chriſtian Sufferer, 1 *Peter* iv. 14. *If ye be reproached for the Name of Chriſt happy are ye; for the Spirit of Glory and of God reſteth upon you.* "The Holy Ghoſt, the "Sanctifier and Paraclete, delights, after the "moſt intimate and friendly Manner to dwell "in your Hearts, to fill them with his moſt "rejoycing Conſolations, and to ſupport you "with his moſt powerful and efficacious Grace.

Now here I dare appeal, as to the Strength of this Argument for proving the Happineſs of theſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, unto all impartial, unprejudiced Perſons, whoſe Conſciences are not ſeared, and who yet believe the Truth of inward and ſpiritual Pleaſures. The truly Chriſtian and Righteous Man, is ſo fully aſcertained of the Reality and incomparable Excellency of theſe Joys, that he would not, by renouncing the Truth or his Duty, forefeit them for all the Comforts and Advantages of the World.

VI. *Sixthly*, That which is a very conſiderable Proof of the Bleſſedneſs of theſe who endure in the Spirit of Patience and Penitence, thoſe Sufferings which meet them in the way

of

of their Duty: They powerfully contribute to purify their Souls from remaining Corruption, and to perfect them into the higheſt Degrees of Holineſs.

This is frequently affirmed in the Scripture, to be the bleſſed Fruit of Affliction in the general, in the Friends and Children of God, and to be the gracious Deſign of their heavenly Father in that Diſpenſation towards them, and conſequently cannot be denied to thoſe Injuries and Evils which the Righteous ſuffer from Men, for the doing of their Duty unto God. Well may we apply to the Caſe of theſe pious and humble Sufferers, the following Texts, *Iſ.* xxvii. 9. *By this ſhall the Iniquity of* Jacob *be purged, and this is all the Fruit to take away his Sin.* That their loving Father, in giving way to the cruelty of Men againſt them, *chaſtiſeth them for their Profit, that they may be Partakers of his Holineſs.* That however this *Chaſtening* of God, and theſe Perſecutions of Men, *ſeem for the preſent not to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheleſs afterward they yield the peaceable Fruit of Righteouſneſs unto them which are exerciſed thereby.* And that, tho by this malicious Treatment *their outward Man periſh, yet the inward Man is renewed Day by Day, Heb.* xii. 10, 11. 2 *Cor.* iv. 16. Accordingly we find, that theſe worthy and noble Heroes, ſo much celebrated either under the old or new Teſtament, for their Favour

with

with God and Piety towards him, were trained up to this moſt eminent and conſpicuous Holineſs by Perſecution and Trouble. Thus plainly it was with *Jacob*, *Joſeph*, *Moſes*, *David*, *Elijah*, and many of the Prophets, and with the Apoſtles of our Lord, and the primitive Chriſtians of all Sorts, whether Teachers or People; and thus ſtill it very often continues to be, with thoſe of a more exemplary Holineſs and Vertue.

As what I have preſently affirmed is plainly atteſted by Scripture and Fact, ſo the Reaſon thereof is obvious: For by theſe Sufferings and Trials, improved and endured aright, the good Man diſcovers much of the World's Vanity, and has his Affections deadned to Things below, and quickned to theſe which are above, the Fewel & Incitements to Voluptuouſneſs and Luxury are thereby happily cut off, & the Soul purged and refined from much adhering Impurity and Droſs. By theſe Injuries and Inſults, the humble and ſerious Chriſtian is excited to the greateſt Fervour in Prayer for the divine Preſence and Conſolation, and unto the exacteſt Inquiry into himſelf and his Ways, whether or not by ſome latent Luſt and Miſcarriage he has provoked his heavenly Father to expoſe him to the Wrath of Men, and thus to awaken him to Amendment. To add no more upon this Head, Perſecution is the the Field or wreſtling Place, where the Chriſtian is made

made ſtrenuous and active, bred up to Hardſhips & Difficulties, delivered from Softneſs and Timidity, & has the Opportunity to exerciſe & improve a great many Graces of the firſt Note and Quality; as Confidence in God, Reſignation to his Will, Self-denial, Fortitude of Mind, Contempt of this World, the firmeſt Faith of that which is to come, and Long-ſuffering, Forgiveneſs, and Love towards his moſt malicious Perſecuters.

How much this Argument ſerves to prove the Happineſs of thoſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, I need not ſtay to repreſent to ſuch, who generouſly aſpire after the higheſt Attainments in Grace and Piety, who hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs, and reckon their Growth and Advancement therein to be their greateſt Glory and Felicity.

VII. And *laſtly*, That which, without the poſſibility of a reaſonable Contradiction, clears and completes the Evidence for the Truth of the Happineſs of theſe pious and religious Ones, who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake; Is, that they are ſecured of the Bleſſedneſs of Heaven, and that in the greateſt Portion and Degree; which extraordinary Reward in that Life which is to come, is ſo glorious in it ſelf, and ſo unalterably inſured to the conſtant and pious Sufferer, that tho it be future, yet with reſpect to it St. *Peter* might very well ſay in the preſent Tenſe, *Ye are happy*.

Now

Now that the ſuffering Chriſtian ſhall be bleſſed, yea eminently bleſſed, in the other World, is very plainly and frequently aſſerted in the Word of God. Our bleſſed Lord concluding the Beatitudes, and knowing that Men of the Chriſtian Temper and Practice would be abhorred and injured by a wicked and unbelieving World; that they might not ſhrink back from the Croſs, nor part with their Piety, he in the hearing of a vaſt Aſſembly proclaims the Certainty of their future and eternal Happineſs, *Matth.* v. 10. *Bleſſed are they which are perſecuted for Righteouſneſs ſake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* And again, that none of the Followers of Jeſus Chriſt might ſcruple to forego their deareſt temporal Comforts and Advantages for his Sake, he aſſures them all without Exception, that *every one that hath forſaken Houſes, or Brethren, or Siſters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for his Names ſake, ſhall receive an hundred fold, and ſhall inherit everlaſting Life. Matth.* xix. 29. Accordingly his Apoſtles do unanimouſly bear Witneſs to this comfortable Truth, and St. *James* particularly ſays; *Bleſſed is the Man that endureth Temptation; for when he is tried,* that is, for his Faithfulneſs and Conſtancy approved, *he ſhall recieve the Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promiſed to them that love him,* Ja. i. 12.

But moreover, God, who graciouſly pro-

portions

portions the Degrees of heavenly Bleſſedneſs to Mens preſent Holineſs and Vertue, beſtows in the Life to come the moſt illuſtrious Glory upon the Sufferers for Righteouſneſs, as ſuitable to their eminent Faith, Patience and Love. Their heavenly Father allots unto them the Portion of the Firſt-born in the *Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. Their loving and ſovereign Lord adorns their Heads with Crowns ſet with the moſt radiant and precious Pearls and Gems, and puts into their Hands the largeſt Bundle of triumphal Palms, as agreeable to their more bloody Agony and Sweat, their ſingular Labour and Fidelity, and that Tribulation they have valiantly endured upon his Account. To this Purpoſe are the Words of Jeſus to his Diſciples, in that divine and admirable Sermon upon the Mount, *Matth.* v. 11, 12. *Bleſſed are ye when Men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſhall ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſly for my ſake: Rejoyce and be exceeding glad*; Exult and ſhout for Joy, expreſs on this Occaſion all the Tokens of Gladneſs Men are wont to do for the moſt welcome News, *For great is your Reward in Heaven.* And accordingly the Apoſtle St. *Peter* improves this Truth into an Argument for incouraging theſe to whom he writes, in the time of the ſevereſt Trial and Perſecution, 1 *Pet.* iv. 12, 13. *Beloved, think it not ſtrange concerning the fiery Trial, which is to try you; as though*

ſome

ſome ſtrange Thing happened unto you: But rejoyce in as much as ye are Partakers of Chriſt's Sufferings; that when his Glory ſhall be revealed, ye may be glad alſo with exceeding Joy.

That the Happineſs of thoſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs, is unqueſtionably & fully demonſtrated by the Reaſon laſt mentioned, will be readily granted by all who believe a bleſſed Immortality, and give Credit to the Deſcription which is given thereof in the Scripture. The Bleſſedneſs of Heaven, is the moſt real, and the only perfect Happineſs: A Happineſs ſo infinitely ſatisfying and glorious, that we have neither Thoughts, nor Fancy, nor Words, adequate or proportionable thereunto. O bleſſed Sufferers! who are ſecured of the moſt liberal Portion of theſe raviſhing & inexpreſſible *Pleaſures and Joys, which are at God's right Hand for evermore.* Theſe unvaluable Joys, which true Believers would be content to purchaſe at the Expence of a thouſand Worlds and Lives, if they were Maſters of them: Joys, before the lively Faith and Expectation of which, all the Sufferings of the Righteous do vaniſh, as it were; and theſe compared with thoſe, are in their Eſteem of no Account and Conſideration. To which the Apoſtle St. *Paul* bears Witneſs, who drank very deep in the bittereſt Cup of Perſecution, *Rom.* viii. 18. *I reckon, that the Sufferings of this preſent Time, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which ſhall be revealed*

vealed in us. And 2 *Cor.* iv. 17. *Our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

And now, Friends, on a Review of theſe Principles, upon which I have proceeded, in proving the Happineſs of theſe pious Chriſtians, who valiantly and meekly ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake; may I not preſume to aver, that, upon Suppoſition of the firmneſs of theſe Grounds, this uſeful and important Doctrine is a Truth of the moſt undenyable and cleareſt Evidence. And therefore now taking this for granted, I go on to ſome Improvement thereof.

1. *Firſt*, From the Truth of the foreſaid Doctrine, *viz.* the Happineſs of theſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, we ſee the lamentable Ignorance and Error of carnal and worldly-minded Men. They reckon the Righteous miſerable, becauſe of thoſe Evils, in which they are involved for the ſake of Righteouſneſs. And upon the contrary, they call them Happy, who live in outward Eaſe and Pleaſure and in the peaceable Poſſeſſion of the Advantages of this Life, even tho they be the Price of Apoſtacy and Wickedneſs. Such Perſons, being blinded by the Love of the World, know not how to reconcile Happineſs to Poverty, Pain, Impriſonment, Proſcription and Death; and therefore they disbelieve the Truth of this Propoſition, tho moſt clearly demonſtrated and plain

plainly affirmed by him who cannot lie. *But let God be true, and every Man a Liar.*

2. *Secondly*, We learn from the Evidence of this great and important Truth, that it is our Wiſdom, as well as Duty, to adhere unto Righteouſneſs and Truth, even in the Time of the moſt terrible Threatnings and Perſecution. They who are wiſe after the Fleſh, who admire the Things of this World, and conſider them as their chiefeſt Good, are ready to mock or pity the honeſt Simplicity of ſuch, who chooſe rather to ſuffer than ſin: And upon the other Hand, they are prone to applaud themſelves for that nick-named Prudence, by which they preſerve their temporal Concerns, tho with the loſs of a good Conſcience here, and of Heaven hereafter. But he who is infinitely Wiſe, and infallibly True, hath judged otherwiſe. He proclaims the Wiſdom of thoſe who take up the Croſs, as prudently ſecuring their Salvation by the loſs of preſent and temporal Things: Whereas he ſolemnly declares the ſtupendous Folly and Improvidence of thoſe who ſinfully flee from Perſecution, and proves it by that unanſwerable Queſtion, *What ſhall it profit a Man to gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul?*

3. *Thirdly*, The ſuffering Chriſtian is taught hereby, that inſtead of repining againſt the divine Providence on the Account of his Sufferings, he ought rather to praiſe and magnify God,

God, that he graciouſly affords him the bleſſed Opportunity and Means of knowing his own Sincerity, of promoting the divine Glory, of partaking of unſpeakable ſpiritual Joys, and of being advanced to the moſt eminent Holineſs in this Life, and Happineſs in the next. Agreeably to this Obſervation, our bleſſed Lord, and his Apoſtles after him, injoined ſuch to whom it might happen to be perſecuted for Righteouſneſs ſake, to rejoyce on that Occaſion. And accordingly the Apoſtles themſelves and other Chriſtians practiſed.

4. *Fourthly*, A ſedate and ſerious Reflecting upon the Felicity of theſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, would be very uſeful to allay and mitigate the Sorrow of ſuch, whoſe deareſt Relatives and Friends may at any Time be involved in Perſecution for their keeping the Faith and a good Conſcience, or a brave and Chriſtian adhering to the Truths and Commandments of God. Why ſhould they in ſuch a Caſe *ſorrow like them who have no Hope*, or give way to exceſſive and irregular Grief, when their Friends are impriſoned, proſcribed, impoveriſhed, or even killed? Seeing they have Reaſon to believe, that their Friends, being good themſelves, and ſuffering in a good Cauſe, are happy, notwithſtanding their outward and worldly Miſeries and Troubles; that the worſe it fares with them here, it ſhall fare ſo much the better with them hereafter, and

that their enduring Grief now for Conſcience toward God, ſhall increaſe their Glory and Joy in Eternity. It was for this Reaſon that the primitive Chriſtians rejoyced with their Friends, and congratulated their Felicity, when they had the Honour and Privilege to be Confeſſors and Martyrs; and that the Church conſidered the Days of the Martyrdom of the Saints as their Birth-days, and appointed them to be obſerved as Feſtivals.

5. *Fifthly*, The Belief of this Truth ſhould ſtiffle our Revenge and Wrath againſt our moſt malicious Perſecuters; ſeeing we know that however evil their Intention may be in perſecuting us, yet the Perſecution it ſelf, through the Grace of God, turns about in the Event to our inexpreſſible Advantage. The bleſſed Fruits which are the product of our Sufferings, ſhould oblige us to overlook the Spite of theſe who are the Authors of them, and calmly to adore the divine Wiſdom and Power, in bringing Good out of Evil, Joy out of Sorrow, Happineſs out of Miſery, and imploying the Hatred of our Enemies to be an Inſtrument of our greateſt Profit.

6. *Sixthly*, 'Tis comfortable to obſerve, that the Happineſs aſſerted of the Sufferers for Righteouſneſs, is not reſtricted to any particular Inſtance either of Righteouſneſs or Suffering. The Righteous, who from a Principle of Love to God, do now ſuffer Baniſhment, Death,

Death, or even the Deprivation of Offices, Benefices or Liberty, for their conſtant adhering to the Practice of any Duty, or the Profeſſion of the Truth, are as truly intitled to the Happineſs of Suffering, as were the Apoſtles and primitive Chriſtians, who ſuffered to the moſt dreadful Extremity, for owning Chriſtianity in oppoſition to Judaiſm and Heatheniſm.

7. *Laſtly*, The Happineſs of thoſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake affords a very powerful Motive and Incouragement to Patience and Conſtancy, in the Time of the hotteſt Perſecution. This Felicity is ſufficient to ſweeten the bittereſt Potion, and the vivid Faith thereof to ſtrengthen the Chriſtian to drink it off with Reſolution and Cheerfulneſs. Would it not be an Inſtance of the moſt ſhameful Cowardice and Folly, in any of the Diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt, to abdicate the Crown of Glory, becauſe the Croſs is appended to it? Or to turn his back upon the Kingdom of Heaven, becauſe Tribulation is in the Way thereunto? Let ſuffering Chriſtians conſider, that their Affliction for the Name of Jeſus is light and momentany; whereas their approaching Glory is exceeding weighty and eternal. Let them accurately examine the Happineſs which is ſecured unto them, and they will evidently ſee that it infinitely outweighs thoſe Troubles which are in the oppoſite Scale; and that it fully anſwers all the Objections of Fleſh and Blood a-

gainſt a State of Perſecution. For they will find to their comfortable Experience, that, however their Rights to their worldly Eſtates may be called in Queſtion, their Evidences to Heaven are cleared. That, tho they are moſt opprobriouſly reviled by a wicked World, yet they are approved by God and their own Conſciences. Tho they be eſteemed by Men blaſphemers of God, and Enemies to Religion, yet he reckons them in the Number of his deareſt Friends. The pious Sufferer obſerves with Joy that his Mind is free, when his Body is impriſoned: That when his Sums decreaſe, and the outward Man decays, his internal Riches and Vigour do increaſe and flouriſh: That when he is deprived of the Delights of the Sons of Men, the divine Conſolations do abound unto him. And finally, tho the Malice of his Perſecuters may be inſtrumental to ſhorten his Life, yet it haſtens his Glory and Bleſſedneſs, makes way for his eſcape out of all Tribulation, and being placed before the Throne of God for ever and ever.

If ever then the infinitely Wiſe God ſhall call us to ſuffer for his Name, or for the Sake of Truth and Righteouſneſs, let us importunately ask of him, that he would firmly eſtabliſh us in the Belief of the Happineſs promiſed to thoſe who do ſo, and let us accuſtom our ſelves to the frequent and ſerious Contemplation thereof, and the exerciſing our Faith about it:

it: And then with *Moſes* we will *chooſe rather to ſuffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleaſures of Sin for a Seaſon.* With him, while we *have reſpect to the Recompenſe of Reward,* we will *eſteem the Reproach of Chriſt greater Riches than all the Treaſures* of this World: While we *ſee him who is Inviſible, and Hope for a better Reſurrection,* we will not fear the Wrath of Man, nor accept of Deliverance upon ſinful Terms; but rather will be ready *for the Joy ſet before us, to endure the Croſs, and deſpiſe the Shame.*

Let us therefore give our full Aſſent to this faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, *If ye ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, happy are ye.* And let our Behaviour be agreeable to the Belief thereof, whenſoever it ſhall be our Condition to ſuffer on ſo glorious an Account: And ſo let us *be Followers of them who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promiſes*; neither *wearying in well-doing,* nor in ſuffering for it; *ſince we know that in due Seaſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not.*

Now the God of all Grace, who hath called us unto his eternal Glory by Chriſt Jeſus, after that ye have ſuffered a while, make you perfect, ſtabliſh, ſtrengthen, ſettle you. To him be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

DISCOURSE III.

1. PETER III. 14.

——*And be not afraid of their Terrour, neither be troubled.*

THIS great and zealous Apoſtle, having once diſcovered a very ſhameful Weakneſs and Timidity in ſhunning of the Croſs, did afterward moſt punctually fulfil that Command of his Lord and Maſter, *When thou art converted, ſtrengthen thy Brethren.* Thus we may obſerve, that in his firſt Epiſtle, and particularly in that Portion thereof which I endeavour to explain in theſe Diſcourſes, he makes it his great Buſineſs to ſupport Chriſtians under their Sufferings, and to animate them into an undaunted Patience and Courage. You may remember that St. *Peter*, by aſſerting, in the firſt Part of the 14 *Verſe*, the Happineſs of thoſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, doth provide the conſtant pious Man with a mighty Encouragement and Conſolation under all his Afflictions in the Cauſe of Holineſs and Truth; when he ſees that his Felicity is ſo far from being impaired, much more deſtroyed, by the Croſs, that there-

by

by it doth arrive at its utmoſt Perfection and Height. And now ye may obſerve how the ſame Apoſtle proceeds in the latter Part of that Verſe, and in theſe which follow it, to give ſome excellent Rules for directing the Behaviour of Chriſtians in the State of Perſecution, and aſſiſting them not to be overpowered into Sin and Defection from the Faith, by the moſt formidable Evils which might threaten their Conſtancy.

The two firſt Advices and Injunctions which St. *Peter* gives in this Affair, are contained in the Words of the Text, and they are eminently uſeful for preſerving the Uprightneſs and Conſtancy of the perſecuted Chriſtian, *And be not afraid of their Terrour, neither be troubled:* That is, " Avoid the baſe and ſinful Fear of " the worſt Things can be inflicted upon you " by Men, for Righteouſneſs ſake: And when " they do moſt cruelly menace, proſecute and " injure you for adhering to your Duty, then " be not weakly dejected and diſquieted in " your Minds; ſhun on this Occaſion an unbe- " coming Sadneſs and Perplexity of Spirit.

By the firſt Precept expreſſed in theſe Words, *Be not afraid of their Terrour*, we are injoined to baniſh from our Hearts Cowardice or Puſillanimity, and to labour after that holy Courage and Fortitude of Soul, which may enable us with Intrepidity to face and encounter thoſe fatal Dangers, with which we may be threat-

ned for *following that which is good*; ſo that the moſt cruel and horrid Uſage we may meet with from Men, which is *their Terrour*, may neither fright us into Sin, nor deter us from Righteouſneſs.

The other Precept contained in the Words of the Text, *viz. Neither be troubled*, affords us this ſeaſonable Advice, That, whatſoever Troubles and Evils may happen at any time, either actually to afflict, or threaten us for Righteouſneſs ſake, we do not part with a Chriſtian Cheerfulneſs and Tranquillity of Mind, nor weakly ſurrender our ſelves to the Dominion of diſcompoſing and anxious Sorrow and Perturbation of Soul.

Before I recommend the firſt of theſe Precepts to our Obedience, *Be not afraid of their Terrour*, it ſeems to be fit to obſerve, that it is no way inconſiſtent with this Injunction, that the Chriſtian avoid Perſecution, ſo far as it can agree with Uprightneſs and the keeping a good Conſcience. 'Tis very lawful in him who is the ſincereſt Follower of that which is good, to have ſuch an Apprehenſion of theſe Evils, with which the Wrath of angry Men may threaten him, as not to expoſe himſelf unto them raſhly and without a juſt Neceſſity: For the doing otherwiſe might involve his Enemies in Guilt, and himſelf in Danger, without his being called thereunto. This Obſervation is warranted by the expreſs Authority of our bleſſed Lord, who

at

at the ſame time that he forbids his Apoſtles the Fear of Man in the Diſcharge of their Miniſtry, he injoins them to *beware of Men*, to *be Wiſe as Serpents*, as well as *harmleſs as Doves*, and when they *are perſecuted in one City*, to *flee to another*, Matth. x. 16, 17, 23.

Now, that we may be perſuaded to obey this Injunction, *Be not afraid of their Terrour*, I ſhall offer theſe Reaſons.

Firſt, Chriſtian Courage and Intrepidity, in not being ſinfully afraid of humane Terror, or thoſe Evils which Men may threaten us with for Righteouſneſs ſake, is a Duty frequently recommended to us in the Scripture, and the contrary Vice of Timidity or irregular Fear forbidden and accurſed.

Secondly, The being ſinfully afraid of Perſecution, or the Wrath of Man, is what's extremely unworthy of a Chriſtian: And that, whether we conſider his own Profeſſion and Belief, or the great Examples which have been given him of undaunted Courage and Intrepidity.

Thirdly, That Conſideration which will exceedingly prevail with every Man who deſires to retain his Integrity and Vertue, is this: Holy Fearleſneſs and Magnanimity is, under God, a ſtrong Guard and Armour to the Chriſtian's Uprightneſs and Piety, in the Day of Perſecution; whereas Fearfulneſs and Puſillanimity do wofully endanger and betray them.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, The Enemies of the Righteous are, in the hotteſt Paroxiſms of their moſt dreadful Fury and Rage, ſo entirely ſubjected to God's Providence and Power, that they cannot, without his Permiſſion, injure the Righteous, nor extend their Proſecutions beyond the Limits which he hath fixed.

Laſtly, The higheſt Pitch to which the Malice of the moſt inveterate and powerful Adverſaries of Truth and Piety can arrive, is to moleſt or ruin the faithful Profeſſors and Friends of the ſame in their outward, bodily and tranſitory Condition.

To begin then with the firſt Reaſon or Argument I named for perſwading us to obey this Injunction of the Apoſtle: *Be not afraid of their Terrour*,

I. Chriſtian Courage and Intrepidity, in not being ſinfully afraid of Humane Terrour, or thoſe Evils which Men may threaten us with, for Righteouſneſs ſake, is a Duty frequently recommended to us in the Scripture, and the contrary Vice of Timidity or irregular Fear forbidden and accurſed.

Thus God by the Prophet *Iſaiah* ſpeaks to his own People after a very ſolemn and ſerious Manner, viii. 11, 12. *The Lord ſpake thus to me with a ſtrong Hand, and inſtructed me, that I ſhould not walk in the Way of this People, ſaying, Say ye not a Confederacy to all them to whom this People ſhall ſay a Confederacy? neither fear*

fear ye their Fear, nor be afraid. And again li. 7. *Hearken unto me ye that know Righteouſneſs, the People in whoſe Heart is my Law; fear ye not the Reproach of Men, neither be ye afraid of their Revilings.* To this very Purpoſe the Apoſtle St. *Paul* exhorts the *Philippians*, & in them all other Chriſtians, i. 27, 28. *Only let your Converſation be as it becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt: Stand faſt in one Spirit with one Mind, ſtriving together for the Faith of the Goſpel: And in nothing terrified by your Adverſaries.* Theſe plain and peremptory Commands of Jeſus Chriſt, *Matth.* x. 28. *Luke* xii. 5. *Fear them not which kill the Body. I ſay unto you, my Friends, be not afraid of them which kill the Body,* tho they be more directly and immediately given to the Apoſtles, the Biſhops and other Paſtors of the Church; yet without all Queſtion their binding Force extends it ſelf univerſally to all Chriſtians, obliging them in their ſeveral Stations, Offices and Occaſions, to do their Duty courageouſly, and to take the utmoſt Care that they never give way to the ſlaviſh and ſinful Fear of Man. But I willingly acknowledge, that, as the Lord commands all his People in general to avoid the irreligious and exorbitant Fear of Man; ſo in particular, he peremptorily warns his Meſſengers, the Miniſters of the Goſpel, the Teachers and Guides of Souls, to ſhun this diſgraceful Vice and Infirmity. Thus God with very great Concern forbids the Prophets,

Jere-

Jeremiah and *Ezekiel* to be diſmaid at the Looks of Men, however perverſe and rebellious they were; and for the fear of their Wrath, to ſuppreſs any Part of the divine Meſſage and Will. The Lord ſays to *Jeremiah*, i. 5, 6, 7. *Thou ſhalt go to all that I ſhall ſend thee, and whatſoever I command thee thou ſhalt ſpeak. Be not afraid of their Faces. Gird up thy Loins, and ariſe, and ſpeak unto them all that I command thee: Be not diſmaid at their Faces, leſt I confound thee before them.* And when God ſends *Ezekiel* to the Children of *Iſrael*, he ſpeaks to him in theſe remarkable Words, *Ezek.* ii. 6. *And thou Son of Man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their Words, tho' Briers & Thorns be with thee, & thou dwell among Scorpions: Be not afraid of their Words, nor be diſmaid at their Looks, tho they be a rebellious Houſe.* And when the Lord Jeſus had given a Commiſſion to the twelve Apoſtles to preach the Goſpel, and had likewiſe forewarned them of the Hatred and Perſecution they ſhould meet with in the doing thereof; he then exhorts them to a faithful and couragious Diſcharge of their Truſt, notwithſtanding thoſe Evils might befal them while they were ſo employed, *Matth.* x. 26, 27. *Fear them not therefore: For there is nothing covered which ſhall not be revealed, and hid that ſhall not be known. What I tell you in Darkneſs, that ſpeak ye in Light, and what ye hear in the Ear, that preach ye upon the Houſe tops.*

So

So acceptable unto Jeſus Chriſt is this religious Courage and Conſtancy, that he is graciouſly pleaſed to promiſe eternal Happineſs thereunto: Whereas he threatens the timorous apoſtatiſing Chriſtian with the inſufferable Pains of Hell, *Rev.* ii. 10. *Fear none of thoſe Things which thou ſhalt ſuffer: Behold the Devil ſhall caſt ſome of you into Priſon, that ye may be tried, and ye ſhall have Tribulation ten Days. Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.* Again, xxi. 7, 8. *He that overcometh ſhall inherit all Things, and I will be his God, and he ſhall be my Son. But the fearful and unbelieving ſhall have their part in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimſtone, which is the ſecond Death.*

And truly, if we will allow our ſelves to enquire into the Nature and Effects of this ſinful Fear and Cowardice, we will not be ſurpriſed to ſee it ſo much forbidden and threatned in the Scripture. For upon Search we will find that it includes conſiderable Degrees of Unbelief, of Self-love & love to the World, & of diſregard to God and Eternity. And as to the Effects thereof, we learn from ſad Experience, that they are no leſs dangerous and criminal than Apoſtacy both from Truth and Righteouſneſs. But I paſs on to the ſecond Motive or Reaſon I propoſed, to induce us to hearken to St. *Peter*'s Direction, *Be not afraid of their Terrour*, viz.

II. The being ſinfully afraid of Perſecution,

or

or the Wrath of Man, is what's extremely unworthy of a Chriſtian : And that whether we conſider his own Profeſſion and Belief, or the great Examples have been given him of holy and undaunted Fortitude and Intrepidity.

A Chriſtian is the ſworn Souldier of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, moſt ſolemnly and ſacredly engaged in a Warfare under him the Captain of our Salvation, againſt the Devil, the World and the Fleſh; and him Jeſus his ſovereign Lord & Leader hath expreſly obliged by a fundamental and unalterable Statute *to take up his Croſs and follow him*, through the moſt terrible Dangers and Inconveniencies. The Chriſtian likewiſe profeſſeth to believe in an Almighty God, the beſt Friend and ſoreſt Enemy; and in Jeſus Chriſt who cheerfully ſuffered the greateſt Evils for his ſake; and that there is an everlaſting Life both of Happineſs and Miſery, to be beſtowed upon Men, according to their final Conſtancy or Apoſtacy. And finally the Chriſtian may continually look upon the glorious Example of Jeſus, the Author and Finiſher of our Faith, who *endured the Croſs, and deſpiſed the Shame*; and upon the great *Cloud of Witneſſes* or Martyrs, who *feared not the Wrath of Man*, nor *loved their Lives unto the Death*. Now, Friends, how ſhameful a Contradiction unto thoſe Engagements and Encouragements would it be, for the Chriſtian to give Way to baſe and degenerous Cowardice; for one of ſuch a Cha-

Character and Faith, timorouſly to ſhrink, and fly away from his Maſter at the Appearance of the Croſs?

III. *Thirdly*, That which ſhould exceedingly prevail with us to obey the Apoſtle, while he commands us not to be afraid of the Terrour of Men, is this Conſideration: Holy Fearleſneſs and Magnanimity is, under God, a ſtrong Guard and Armour to the Chriſtian's Uprightneſs and Piety; whereas Fearfulneſs and Puſillanimity do wofully endanger and betray them.

When the Chriſtian hath reduced the Paſſion of Fear into Subiection, and put its Neck under the Yoke of Religion and Reaſon; and when he hath attained to that Fortitude of Soul, which enables him nobly to deſpiſe the moſt fatal Dangers which can oppoſe themſelves to him in the Paths of Truth and Piety: Then he is ſecure, like the Rock in the midſt of the Sea, againſt the moſt ſwelling and impetuous Billows of Perſecution. This ſtrong ſpiritual Armour and Firmneſs of Mind, makes the Chriſtian Proof againſt the ſharpeſt Shot and Thruſts of Mens Hatred and Rage, and emboldens him, as 'tis ſaid of the Leviathan, *Job* lxi. 29. *to count their Darts as Stubble, and to laugh at the ſhaking of the Spear.*

Time would fail me, to mention but the thouſandth part of thoſe Witneſſes I might bring for the proving what I have ſaid. And therefore, leaving you to conſult the Martyrologiſts

logiſts at your own Leaſure, I ſhall only at preſent deſire you to take notice of the bleſſed Effects of this holy Courage and Reſolution, in two Inſtances. This contributed to preſerve the Integrity of thoſe famous *Triumviri, Shadrach, Meſhach* and *Abed-nego*, when the greateſt Monarch, in his moſt outragious Wrath, threatned them with the burning Furnace, if they would not worſhip his fondling Image; And emboldned them to anſwer him with an admirable Stayedneſs of Spirit, *Dan.* iii. 16, 17, 18. *O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to anſwer thee in this Matter*: That is, "We are "not at a Stand what to do, nor anxious about "the Event of this Buſineſs. *Be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not ſerve thy Gods, nor worſhip the golden Image which thou haſt ſet up.* The other Inſtance, to ſhew the Efficacy of religious Fortitude and Intrepidity, to confirm the Chriſtian in the moſt dangerous Times, is from the Behaviour of St. *Paul*, as it is recorded in the xx. and xxi. *chap.* of the *Acts*. After he had told the Elders of *Epheſus*, that he knew that *Bonds and Afflictions did abide him at* Jeruſalem, whether he was going; he adds theſe Words well becoming his heroick Chriſtian Courage and the great Character which he bore, *Acts* xx. 24. *But none of theſe Things move me, neither count I my Life dear unto my ſelf, ſo that I might finiſh my Courſe with Joy, and the Miniſtry, which I have received of the*

Lord

Lord Jeſus to teſtify the Goſpel of the Grace of God. And again, xxi. 13. when at *Ceſarea* the Believers beſought him not to go up to *Jeruſalem*, he gives them this expoſtulatory Anſwer, *What mean ye to weep, and to break mine Heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but alſo to die at* Jeruſalem *for the Name of the Lord Jeſus.*

But, ah Friends! As the not being afraid of the Terror of Men, ſecures the Chriſtians Integrity in the Day of Perſecution; ſo the unjuſt and ſinful Fear thereof, is the greateſt Betrayer of his Vertue.

The Man who is under the Dominion of Fear and poſſeſſed with weak and daſtardly Apprehenſions of thoſe Evils, with which cruel & wicked Men may afflict him for adhering to his Duty, lyes naked to all Attacks, is an eaſy Conqueſt to every Invader of his Faith, puts it in the Power of Perſecuters to make him Infidel or Vitious when they pleaſe; and brings himſelf into this ignoble and deplorable State that he is no longer ſure of the Faith and a good Conſcience, than Men ceaſe to moleſt or threaten him, which, in the Judgment of every ingenuous and generous Soul, is the moſt deſpicable Condition, and the moſt intolerable Slavery.

'Tis in the Senſe of theſe woful Conſequences which attend ſinful and irregular Fear, that *Solomon* obſerves concerning it, *Prov.* xxix.

25. *The Fear of Man bringeth a Snare: But whoſo putteth his Truſt in the Lord ſhall be ſafe.* How many ſad Proofs there are of this Obſervation in the Hiſtory of the Church, I ſhall not now ſtay to rehearſe. We have a very plain one from the Words of the Evangeliſt St. *John*, xii. 42. *Among the chief Rulers alſo many believed on him, but becauſe of the Phariſees they did not confeſs him, leſt they ſhould be put out of the Synagogue:* And we all know into what a height of Iniquity St. *Peter* himſelf was once ſurpriſed by a Fit of ſinful Fear; for to eſcape the Wrath of the chief Prieſts and Elders, he became aſhamed of his Maſter, and was ſo far from confeſſing him before Men, or adhering to him, according to the ſolemn Proteſtation he had lately made, that *he denied him thrice.*

And now, Brethren, before I proceed to the two remaining Arguments, which I propoſed for encouraging the Chriſtian againſt the ſinful Fear of Perſecution; let us look back a little upon the Reaſons which I have already explained in purſuit of that Deſign, and then we will find, that every Man is obliged to root out of his Soul irreligious Timidity and Cowardice, who has a juſt Reſpect to God, to Truth and Holineſs, or to his own Uprightneſs in this World, and Happineſs in the next. We have ſeen from the Prohibitions and Threatnings of God againſt irregular Fear, how highly diſ-

pleaſing

pleaſing it is to him, and dangerous to us. We have likewiſe learned, that this timorous daſtardly Diſpoſition is very unbecoming the Diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt, and inconſiſtent with their Profeſſion; and that it is a deadly Enemy to their Conſtancy and Patience, and a moſt villanous Traytor to their Vertue. Then let us yield to the Force of theſe irrefragable Reaſons, and cheerfully ſacrifice our weak and ſinful Fears to the Fear of God, the Love of Truth, and a holy Regard to our own Innocence here, and Salvation hereafter.

IV. *Fourthly*, That which contributes very much to encourage us againſt the ſinful Fear of Men, is this comfortable Truth: The Enemies of the Church of God are ſo intirely ſubjected to his Providence, and the Church, upon the other Hand, is ſo watchfully regarded by the ſame Providence, that they, the Enemies of the Church, cannot injure it without the divine Permiſſion, nor extend their Proſecutions againſt the Righteous beyond the Limits which God hath fixed.

This Doctrine is very agreeable to thoſe lofty Expreſſions we have in the Scripture, concerning God's univerſal and irreſiſtible Dominion and Government, whereby he rules and diſpoſes of all Things within his vaſt Empire without Controul. Thus we are told, that *the Greatneſs, and the Power, and the Glory, and the Victory, and the Majeſty, and the Kingdom*

are God's; that *He is exalted as Head above all*, and that *none is able to withſtand him, who doth according to his will in the Army of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth, and none can ſtay his Hand, or ſay unto him, What doſt thou?* That he *bringeth the Counſel of the Heathen to nought, and maketh the Devices of the People of none Effect*: But *his Counſel ſtandeth for ever, and the Thoughts of his Heart to all Generations*; that *in his Hand are all our Ways, in whom we live, move, and have our being. And who is he that ſaith, and it cometh to paſs, when the Lord commandeth it not?*

Now, tho the Truth of the foreſaid Aſſertion, that God over-rules the Wicked, and careth for the Righteous, may be fairly deduced and proved from the unlimited Extent of his Providence; yet I ſhall not reſt in this general Evidence, but alſo cite from holy Writ thoſe Witneſſes which give plain and particular Teſtimony to both the Parts thereof. Thus, as to the firſt, the Pſalmiſt ſays, *Pſ.* xxxvii. 32, 33. *The Wicked watcheth the Righteous, and ſeeketh to ſlay him. The Lord will not leave him in his Hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.* And again 14 and 15 Verſes, *The Wicked have drawn out the Sword, and have bent their Bow, to caſt down the Poor and Needy, and to ſlay ſuch as be of upright Converſation. Their Sword ſhall enter into their own Heart, and their Bows ſhall be broken.* Accordingly when *Pilate* being

ing ſurpriſed with our Saviour's Silence, while arraigned before him, did expoſtulate with him thus, *John* xix. 10. *Speakeſt thou not unto me? Knoweſt thou not that I have Power to crucifie thee, and have Power to releaſe thee:* Our bleſſed Lord returned this Anſwer unto *Pilate*, 11 Verſe, *Thou couldſt have no Power at all againſt me, except it were given thee from above.* "Unleſs my heavenly Father had conſented unto "it, it had not been in thy Power to put a Hair "of my Head out of Order, or to treat me with "the leaſt Violence. To this Reaſon St. *John* doth aſcribe our Saviour's Preſervation from the malicious Inclinations and Deſigns of the *Jews*, *John* vii. 30. *Then they ſought to take him, but no Man laid Hands on him; becauſe his Hour was not yet come.* Theſe crafty and ſpiteful Enemies of Jeſus could not perform their Enterpriſe againſt him, becauſe the determined Time was not come, in which he was to be delivered up into the Hands of the Wicked; but when that Time was come, then they eaſily accompliſhed their cruel Deſires and Intentions againſt him, as he himſelf tells the chief Prieſts and Captains of the Temple, and the Elders which were come to apprehend him, *Luke* xxii. 52, 53, — *When I was daily with you in the Temple, ye ſtretched forth no Hands againſt me; but this is your Hour, and the Power of Darkneſs.*

But as the Enemies of the Righteous are under the invincible Reſtraints of divine Providence, ſo the Righteous are the Objects of its very tender and particular Care. This is repreſented to us in the Word of God, by Expreſſions and Similitudes, which give the higheſt Notion thereof imaginable, and import God's moſt vigilant and affectionate Regard to his Servants. Thus 'tis ſaid, that, *As a Father pitieth his Children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him*; that however *the Mother may forget her ſucking Child, yet he will not forget his People*; that *as the Bridegroom rejoyceth over his Bride, ſo the Lord rejoyceth over them*; that *they who touch them, touch the Apple of his Eye*; that *they are graven upon the Palms of his Hands*; and that *his Eyes are upon them, and his Ears open to their Cry*; and that he is their vigilant *Keeper, who neither ſlumbers nor ſleeps*; and, to add no more, that *he* himſelf *is ever with them*, after the neareſt and moſt friendly Manner.

In Confirmation of what is ſo plainly aſſerted in the Scripture, it were eaſy from it and the Hiſtory of the Church, to let us ſee, how glorioufly Almighty God hath triumphed over the furious Wrath of the moſt powerful Enemies of his People; how he hath extinguiſhed the devouring Flames of their Rage, prevented, ſtopped, or reſtrained it according to his Pleaſure; ſhewed himſelf to be above them in the Time of their moſt daring and inſolent

Pride,

Pride, and preſerved or delivered his Church and Servants *by a mighty Hand and out ſtretched Arm.* Thus God brought the Children of *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*, he turned back the Captivity of the *Jews*, he delivered the three Children from the burning Furnace, and *Daniel* from the Lyon's Den; the Lord brought St. *Peter* out of Priſon, and ſmote the vain-glorious and perſecuting *Herod*, who deſigned to have made him a Sacrifice to the blind Zeal and Fury of the *Jews*, and of their Leaders, the chief Prieſts, the Elders, the Scribes and Phariſees. And it ought never to be forgotten, that the great Adverſary of the Church, the Devil himſelf, the Prince and Cheiftan of all its Enemies, could not without Licence put forth his Hand againſt the Eſtate or Body of *Job*, nor afflict that righteous Man, longer or ſorer than God thought convenient.

And now, Friends, is not the Inference from the foregoing Premiſſes very natural and obvious, *viz.* That we ſhould not be ſinfully afraid of humane Terrour? Are the Righteous the dear Favourites of God, and the ſpecial Charge of his Providence; and muſt the Devil's, the *Shemei*'s, the *Pharaoh*'s, the *Senacherib*'s, the *Nebuchadnezzar*'s, the Scribes and Phariſees, the moſt inveterate and formidable Enemies of the Church firſt obtain Leave, before they can moleſt and perſecute it: And hath God *a Hook in their Noſe, and a Bridle in their Lips,*

whereby he moderates their maddeſt Rage, and draws them back when he pleaſes from the wildeſt or moſt untamed Excurſions thereof? Then what is more reaſonable than for the Righteous to arm themſelves with Courage againſt the ſharpeſt Perſecution, and boldly to reſolve with the Pſalmiſt, *Pſ.* cxviii. 6. *The Lord is on my Side, I will not fear: What can Man do unto me?*

This Argument againſt the ſinful Fear of Man's Wrath is approved by God himſelf, *Iſ.* xli. 10, *&c. Fear thou not, for I am with thee: Be not diſmaid, for I am thy God: I will ſtrengthen thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right Hand of my Righteouſneſs. Behold all they that were incenſed againſt thee, ſhall be aſhamed and confounded: They ſhall be as nothing, and they that ſtrive with thee ſhall periſh.* Our bleſſed Lord likewiſe uſeth this Reaſon while he is encouraging the Apoſtles to the preaching of the Goſpel, tho Men ſhould perſecute them for ſo good a Deed, *Matth.* x. 29, 30, 31. *Are not two Sparrows ſold for a Farthing, and one of them ſhall not fall on the Ground without your Father? But the very Hairs of your Head are all numbred. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many Sparrows.*

V. And now *laſtly*, That we may, chearfully comply with St. *Peter*'s Exhortation, *Be not afraid of their Terrour*, let us conſider that the higheſt Pitch to which the Malice of the moſt implacable and powerful Adverſaries of Truth and Piety can arrive, is,

to

to moleſt or ruin the faithful Profeſſors and Friends of the ſame, in their outward, bodily and tranſitory State.

This Truth is both very plainly aſſerted by our Saviour, and ſeriouſly improved by him for arming his Apoſtles and all his Diſciples whatſoever againſt the ſlaviſh and irregular Fear of Men, *Matth.* x. 28. *Fear them not which kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul,* *Luke* xii. 4. *I ſay unto you my Friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do.* That this laſt Argument may be repreſented to us in its full Force, let us take Notice that the Evils with which when Men, left to the full Swing of their own malicious Inclinations, can afflict the Righteous, are,

Firſt, Only outward and bodily.

Secondly, They are temporary, and of ſhort Continuance.

Thirdly, The laſt Extremity of them, is the killing of the Body.

1. *Firſt*, The Evils with which Men, when left to the full Swing of their own malicious Inclinations, can afflict the Righteous, are only *outward and bodily.* The Wicked, when not reſtrained by Providence, may defame the faithful Servants of God with the vileſt Calumnies; they may ſpoil them of their Goods, confiſcate their Eſtates, deprive them of Offices, impriſon their Perſons, and maim or torture their Bodies,

and

and by ſundry other Ways hurt and injure them in their external and worldly Condition; but farther they cannot proceed: For that's the proper Scene on which their Malice and Activity can diſplay themſelves, the internal State of the Righteous, being without their Verge and Limits. God hath ſaid to the proud Wrath of the moſt terrible Perſecuters, *Hitherto mayeſt thou come, and no further*; and he hath ſecured the Souls of the Righteous, with the ſpiritual Bleſſings, Comforts and Advantages relating to them, againſt the fierceſt Aſſaults of their moſt violent and powerful Enemies. So that however the *outward Man* of the Friends of God *may periſh*, be harraſſed and deſtroyed by the Cruelty of the Wicked: Yet *their inward Man grows day by Day*; they advance and proſper in the good State of their Minds, in gracious Endowments, and internal Peace and Joy.

Thus it comes to paſs, that tho the Bodies of pious ſuffering Chriſtians, may be ſhut up within the cloſeſt, darkeſt and moſt melancholy Priſon; yet their Souls may enjoy the Light of God's Countenance, and the moſt bleſſed Enlargement and Liberty; and they may with St. *Paul* and *Silas* ſing the very *Ela*, the higheſt Note of internal Melody and Joy. When they are outwardly reduced to Uglineſs, Rags and Beggery; their Minds ſhine with the moſt radiant Splendour and Beauty, they are all *glorious within, rich in Faith, and Heirs of the King-*

dom

dom which God hath promiſed to them that love him. And tho the couragious and faithful Chriſtians may be baniſhed from their earthly Dwellings and Country, and the Society of their deareſt Friends, yet their worldly Exile drives them nearer to their heavenly Country and Habitation, and the All-ſufficient and merciful God is ever with them; he continues to *be their God, and they his People*, they are Citizens *of the Jeruſalem that is above*; *they dwell in God, and he in them.* In thoſe gloomy Circumſtances from without, God is graciouſly pleaſed to fill their Hearts with incomparable Joy, and to honour them in their Solitude and Retirement, with the moſt intimate Communion with, and Manifeſtation of himſelf. Accordingly we find that *David* under *Saul*'s Perſecution wrote, by the Inſpiration of the holy Ghoſt, many of thoſe *Pſalms* which the Church reads and ſings with much Pleaſure and Advantage: And the Book of *Revelation* was dictated unto St. *John* by our bleſſed Lord, while he was an Exile and Priſoner *in the Iſle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the Teſtimony of Jeſus Chriſt.*

2. But *Secondly*, As the Sufferings with which the Righteous are afflicted by Men, for the ſake of Truth or Piety, are inconſiderable for their Nature and Quality, being only outward and bodily: So that which ſhould mightily encourage Chriſtians againſt the Fear of them, is, that

that they are *temporary* and of ſhort Continuance. They at fartheſt laſt no longer than the Life of the Righteous, which is ſoon cut off and flies away; and when compared with that glorious Eternity, which they have in View, is but a Point, a Minute, yea, a very nothing. Suitably to this the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, ſpeaking of thoſe Troubles which the Chriſtian endures for the ſake of Jeſus, doth with a holy and generous Contempt, call them *the Sufferings of this preſent time*, and *the light Affliction which laſteth but for a Moment*. When the pious Sufferers have left this World, then they are without the Reach of their moſt malicious Perſecuters, as to the Senſe of any farther Pain and Trouble: *They reſt from their Labours*, and they *no more hear the Voice of the Oppreſſor*; but have happily retired to thoſe bleſſed Regions, and that City of Refuge, whether the Wicked cannot purſue them, nor hurt them, tho they could; and where thoſe *Rivers* of unmingled *Pleaſures* which are *at Gods right Hand*, do fill their Souls with infinite Delight, and efface the Remembrance of their former Afflictions, unleſs in as far as it may contribute to heighten their Joy.

3. And now *thirdly*, We learn from theſe Words of Jeſus Chriſt, which I have already rehearſed; that the laſt Act, or final Conſummation of the Cruelty of wicked Men againſt the Righteous, is the *killing* of their *Bodies*; while

the

the Life and Happineſs of their Souls are perfectly ſecured againſt the Malice of all their Enemies.

That we may have the fuller View of the Strength of this Argument, to diſſwade the Chriſtian from the ſinful Fear of Man's Wrath and Cruelty, it will not be amiſs for us to make the following Reflections. That, when the Wicked kill the Bodies of the religious and faithful Diſciples of Chriſt, they do no more than what ſome Diſeaſe or unlucky Accident may, or old Age will certainly perform. They only violently throw down thoſe weak and tottering Cottages of Clay, which within a little Time would fall, maugre all the Endeavours could be uſed for their Preſervation. Tho theſe mortal and corruptible Bodies of the Righteous may be inhumanely deſtroyed, and ſeparated from their Souls; yet 'tis only for a Seaſon: For they ſhall be re united with a moſt glorious Improvement, and without the Poſſibility of being ſeparated for ever. The Ungodly, by killing the Bodies of God's faithful Servants, put an End to their frail Life, and its fading Enjoyments: But thus they unwarily do the greateſt Benefit to the Righteous, by putting an End likewiſe to all their Miſeries and Trials, and thruſting them in as it were on the Poſſeſſion of endleſs & inexpreſſible Joys.

Finally, let us remember, that the exterminating deadly Malice of the Wicked is confined

to

to the frail and leſs valuable Part of thoſe who firmly adhere to their Duty. They may kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul. The killing deſtructive Power of the greateſt Perſecuters cannot reach, in any Senſe, the Souls of the Righteous, which are their immortal and glorious Part. Theſe Souls the Wicked can neither make ceaſe to be, nor throw into Hell, nor keep out of Heaven.

Before I advance any farther, let me earneſtly intreat you, whoever ye are, to conſider ſeriouſly the Strength of this laſt Argument to perſwade us to obey the Exhortation of St. *Peter*, *Be not afraid of their Terrour*. And particularly I deſire to addreſs my ſelf to thoſe, who being for the preſent enamoured of Truth and Righteouſneſs, and willing to retain their Integrity, in the time of the moſt violent Perſecution, are nevertheleſs, from a Senſe of humane Frailty, jealous leſt their Fleſh and Blood might ſhrink and recoil at the dreadful Appearance of Reproach, Poverty, Baniſhment and Death; and ſo they be frighted from their Duty by the Terrour of Men. Such pious & humble Perſons I beſeech frequently & gravely to conſider, that all the Troubles and Evils with which the Wicked can afflict the Righteous, are only outward, ſhort and bodily: And this, through the Grace of God, will embolden them to encounter, and afford them Strength to overcome thoſe moſt tragical and bloody Dangers, into which the keeping

keeping the Faith and a good Conſcience may engage them.

Remember, Chriſtians, that the Wrath of the moſt enraged Perſecuters, even then when the utmoſt Licence is allowed to it, is bounded by your Bodies, and worldly State, as to the Object; and by your Life, as to the Duration thereof. So that however, with the divine Permiſſion, angry Men may rob you of your Reputation with the World, of your earthly Riches, and of your Liberty and Life; yet they cannot deprive you of God's Favour, nor of the Joys of the Holy Ghoſt, nor the Peace of your Minds, nor of Grace here, nor of Glory hereafter, nor ever expunge your Names out of the Book of everlaſting Life. Reflect, ye honeſt and couragious Friends of God, that when his and your Enemies make the moſt tumultuous Buſtle and Noiſe, about thoſe crazy and leaky Tabernacles, in which your Spirits are lodged: Yet theſe noble Gueſts and Pilgrims may enjoy the ſereneſt Calm, and the moſt admirable Pleaſure. Tho the Ungodly may beat down thoſe little muddy Fortreſſes where your Souls kept Garriſon for a while; yet theſe are ſafe and untouched, and they fly away from the windy Storm and Tempeſt to their ſovereign Lord to receive the Reward of their Fidelity. And thus your Perſecuters, by exerting their extremeſt Cruelty upon you, do, tho without Deſign, take the moſt compendious Method to make you quickly happy: For

by

by haſtning your Death they accelerate the Deliverance of your impriſoned Spirits from the Thraldom and Miſeries of this Life, and their Admiſſion into the large, the free and happy Regions of Heaven, there to dwell and reign for evermore.

But now the Chriſtian being ſenſible of his natural Weakneſs and Infirmity, and of that ſtrong Averſion which Fleſh and Blood have to Suffering: He will probably be deſirous to know how he may be enabled to comply with this Injunction, *Be not afraid of their Terrour.* To ſatisfie him a little in this, I ſhall offer the following Advice.

1. Firſt of all, That we may attain to Chriſtian Fortitude and Intrepidity in the Time of Perſecution, it will be abſolutely neceſſary for us with a humble Importunity to make our Addreſſes to God, that he would be graciouſly pleaſed to endue us therewith. For, *as every good and perfect Gift cometh down from the Father of Lights*, ſo in particular this of holy Fearleſneſs and Courage, which includes in its Nature and Conſtitution many Graces of the firſt Magnitude. We muſt *be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might*, without whom nothing is ſtrong, nothing is holy; without whoſe Aſſiſtance we can neither act nor ſuffer in that Manner which is acceptable unto him. Thus St. *Paul* writing to the *Philippians*, ſays *Phil.* i. 29. *Unto you it is given in the Behalf of Chriſt, not*

not only to believe on him, but alſo to ſuffer for his Sake. And the ſame Apoſtle, in that ardent Prayer he pours forth unto God in behalf of the Chriſtians at *Coloſſe*, intreats that they *may be ſtrengthned with all Might according to his glorious Power, unto all Patience and Long-ſuffering with Joyfulneſs*, *Col.* i. 11. If then we would not ignobly tremble and be appalled before the Terrour of Men, let us earneſtly beſeech Almighty God to fortify our Minds with his heavenly Grace, to ennoble them with that divine and ſupernatural Courage, which may excite and ſtrengthen us to walk on in the Paths of Truth and Righteouſneſs, in ſpite of all that Perſecution with which the Enemies of both may either threaten or afflict us.

2. *Secondly*, If we would not be afraid of Men, let us uſe our utmoſt Endeavours to get our Hearts poſſeſſed with the awful and holy Fear of God; and then we will find by happy Experience, that the latter Fear drives away the former. If, as *Solomon* obſerves, *Prov.* xvi. 6. The *departing from Evil*, univerſally and every way, be the bleſſed Effect of *Fearing the Lord*, then it is reaſonable to think, that the ſinful daſtardly Fear of Man is thrown out and baniſhed from the Hearts of ſuch in whom the true Fear of God prevails. They who *fear him who can kill Soul and Body, and caſt both into Hell*, will not irregularly fear them, whoſe Power reaches no farther than to *kill the Body*;

whoſoever dreads the Wrath of him who is omnipotent, who trembles *to fall into the Hands of the living God*, whoſe *Fury is poured out like Fire*, will not be afraid of Man's Terrour, when it appears in its moſt frightful Shape. Such who are afraid of being ſent away from the Preſence of God for ever, can eaſily endure the being baniſhed from their Country, and the Company of their moſt beloved Relatives and Friends, when the Enjoyment of theſe cannot be continued upon any other Terms than the renouncing of Truth and Righteouſneſs. In a Word, they who believe and dread the Miſeries of the damned, who think with horrour upon outer Darkneſs, the Fire that cannot be quenched, and the Worm that never dies, will reckon it the greateſt Folly and Inconſiderateneſs, to expoſe themſelves to theſe by ſhunning the moſt melancholy Dungeon, the moſt abject Poverty, and the moſt cruel Death.

3. *Thirdly*, They whoſe Hearts are inflamed with the Love of God, are ſtrongly fortified againſt the Impreſſions of ſinful Fear and Cowardice, when wrathful Perſecuters do either threaten or attack them. Wherever Love is in a high Meaſure and Degree, it nobly encounters all Dangers and Difficulties, in order to the pleaſing, ſerving and enjoying the beloved Perſon or Friend. Now this is eminently true of the Love of God where it reigns, according to the plain Aſſertion of St *John* 1 *Epiſt.* iv. 18.

There

There is no Fear in Love, but perfect Love caſteth out Fear: Becauſe Fear hath Torment: He that feareth is not perfect in Love. Theſe high Expreſſions which *Solomon* in his myſtical Song uſes concerning the victorious Force of Love, are chiefly to be applied to divine Seraphical Love, that flaming Love which devout and holy Souls have to God: This *Love* indeed *is ſtrong as Death: the Coals thereof are Coals of Fire, which hath a moſt vehement Flame; many Waters cannot quench it, neither can the Flouds drown it: If a Man would give all the Subſtance of his Houſe for this Love, it would utterly be contemned*, *Cant.* viii. 6, 7. If then we would not at any Time be frightned into ſinful Courſes and Compliances, and into a woful Defection from our Duty, let us beg of him who *is Love*, and *dwells in Love*, that he would kindle and preſerve in our Hearts that ardent vehement Love to himſelf, which the moſt impetuous Deluge of humane Wrath and Perſecution may not be able to extinguiſh.

4. *Fourthly*, The exerciſing a lively and vigorous Faith about the Glory and Happineſs which is provided in the World to come for thoſe excellent and righteous Perſons, who valiantly endure all theſe Perſecutions they meet with here for Righteouſneſs ſake, would inſpire the Chriſtian with invincible Fortitude and Courage, fill his Soul with a noble Contempt of Mens Terrour, and carry him forward tri-

umphantly in the way of his Duty, notwithſtanding the fierceſt Oppoſition of enraged and powerful Men. St. *Paul* writing to the *Hebrews*, *Ch.* xi. diſcourſes this Matter admirably; he demonſtrates the Force and Efficacy of Faith to the Purpoſe I have named; firſt by deſcribing its Nature, and then by giving an Account of its Effects in ſome very glorious and memorable Examples. As to the firſt, he ſays, *Faith is the Subſtance of Things hoped for, the Evidence of Things not ſeen*; *i. e.* "The "Believer is as firmly perſuaded of the Cer- "tainty of future Happineſs, as if he were put "into the Poſſeſſion thereof. His Faith, as it "were, gives actual Being and Exiſtence to "the great Things which he expects; it makes "them, however otherwiſe diſtant, yet to ſub- "ſiſt and be preſent in his Mind. *Faith is the Evidence of Things not ſeen*; "It depoſes, ſo "to ſpeak, for the Truth of their Exiſtence, "and convinces the Believer as fully of the "Certainty of them, as if he did preſently en- "joy them and ſee them with his Eyes. Faith "removes the Vail before the ſpiritual Eye of "the Believer, and ſo brightens and ſtrength- "ens its Sight, that however the Things which "are above be inviſible to others, yet they are "clearly repreſented to him. But as we learn from this Deſcription which St. *Paul* gives of Faith, how accountable it is, that they who are endued therewith, ſhould with a holy Fear-

leſneſs

leſneſs and Courage, endure the moſt terrible Evils, which Men may threaten them with for Righteouſneſs ſake: So this Apoſtle aſcribes to Faith the undaunted Fortitude and Patience of the Saints, and thoſe glorious Triumphs which they obtained over the ſharpeſt and moſt dreadful Perſecutions. *By Faith*, ſaith he, it was, that *Moſes chooſed rather to ſuffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleaſures of Sin for a Seaſon: Eſteeming the Reproach of Chriſt greater Riches than the Treaſures in* Egypt: *For he had reſpect to the Recompenſe of Reward. By Faith he forſook* Egypt, *not fearing the Wrath of the King; for he endured as ſeeing him who is inviſible.* Again St. *Paul*, ſpeaking of the amazing Efficacy of Faith in others, ſome of whom were of the weaker Sex, he tells us, *Others were tortured, not accepting Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Reſurrection: And others had Trial of cruel Mockings, and Scourgings, yea moreover of Bonds and Impriſonment. They were ſtoned, they were ſawn aſunder, were tempted, were ſlain with the Sword: They wandred about in Sheep Skins, and Goat Skins, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented: Of whom the World was not worthy; they wandred in Deſarts, and in Mountains, and in Dens and Caves of the Earth. Theſe all obtained a good Report through Faith.* And to ſay no more upon this Head, we are taught by the ſame Apoſtle St. *Paul*, *Heb.* xii.

2. that *Jeſus the Author and Finiſher of our Faith, for the Joy that was ſet before him, endured the Croſs, deſpiſing the Shame.*

5. *Fifthly*, They who would not be ſinfully afraid of humane Terrour, who would not for the Fear of it deny any known Truth, or neglect and contradict any known Duty: Let them entertain juſt Sentiments and Thoughts concerning the good and evil Things of this preſent World, the Advantages and Diſadvantages, the Honour and Diſhonour, the Pleaſures and Pains thereof; taking Care that they do not over-rate them, by reckoning the good Things better, and the evil Things worſe than they are; and that they do not place their Happineſs in the Enjoyment of the former, nor their Miſery in ſuffering the latter. Let them be fully perſwaded upon the one hand of the Vanity of all Things here below, in order to true complete Felicity, and upon the other hand, of the comparative Levity, and ſhort Continuance of the Troubles and Calamities of this Life. Agreeably to theſe Thoughts, let them govern their Affections and Averſions towards the Things which are here; and particularly, let them *not love the World, nor the Things* which are therein, by giving way to Ambition, Covetouſneſs, or Voluptuouſneſs. This wiſe Conduct in Chriſtians would preſerve them from inglorious Fear in the worſt of Times, and contribute exceedingly to fortify their

Minds

Minds againſt the Wrath and Terrour of their moſt malicious Perſecuters. For the woful Cauſe of diſgraceful and irregular Fear in many, when they are threatned with the Loſs of Riches, Honours, Eaſe, Liberty and Life, and with the Preſence of the contrary Evils, is becauſe they have fooliſhly placed their Happineſs too much in thoſe, and their Miſery too much in theſe, and have fondly and wickedly given their Hearts to the World and the Things thereof, in *the Luſt of the Eye, the Luſt of the Fleſh*, or *the Pride of Life*. If then we would *run with Patience the Race that is ſet before us*, go forward in the Chriſtian Courſe, couragiouſly facing theſe Dangers which attack us by the Way, *let us*, as St. *Paul* adviſes the *Hebrews*, *Heb.* xii. 1. *lay aſide every Weight, and the Sin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us*. Let us diſengage our ſelves from all Impediments and Lets whatſoever, from without, or from within, and more eſpecially from a ſinful Attachment to the Things of this preſent Life, from worldly-mindedneſs in any of the Kinds or Inſtances thereof, as it hath for its Object either the Profits, Preferments or Pleaſures of the World. In a Word, as we would not ſuccumb, but bravely ſtand it out, let us learn to *deny our ſelves, to crucify the Fleſh with the Affections and Luſts*, and to be *crucified to the World*, and to have *the World crucified unto us*.

Sixthly and *Laſtly*, It would be very uſeful to the Chriſtian, for preſerving him from Fearfulneſs and Cowardice, and for raiſing his Courage to the higheſt Pitch, that he had continually before his Eyes the moſt glorious Example of Jeſus Chriſt the Captain of our Salvation, and the heroick Bravery and Patience of the Saints. For then he would be aſhamed baſely and ſinfully to turn his Back upon theſe Dangers, which not only his Lord & General, but alſo his Fellow-ſouldiers did boldly encounter and overcome. The Apoſtle, ſo often already mentioned, confirms the Truth of what I am ſaying concerning the powerful Influence that the Example of our bleſſed Lord and his Servants, when often and ſeriouſly thought upon, would have upon Chriſtians, to excite them to the moſt fearleſs Courage and Magnanimity: For he fully improves it to that very Purpoſe, as we learn to our great Satisfaction from the following Words, *Heb.* xii. 1, 2, 3. *Wherefore, ſeeing we alſo are compaſſed about with ſuch a Cloud of Witneſſes, let us run with Patience the Race which is ſet before us; looking unto Jeſus the Author and Finiſher of our Faith, who, for the Joy that was ſet before him, endured the Croſs, deſpiſing the Shame, and is ſet down at the right Hand of the Throne of God. For conſider him that endured ſuch Contradiction of Sinners againſt himſelf, leſt ye be wearied and faint in your Minds.* O my Friends! if the Chriſtian, amidſt the direſt

direſt Sufferings, either threatned or felt, for Righthouſneſs ſake, would by the Power of Thought and Imagination ſuppoſe himſelf ſurrounded with the noble Army of Martyrs, from righteous *Abel* to this very Day, and with their moſt loving and glorious Lord upon their Head: Would not this rouſe his Spirit, encourage him to the Battle, make him bluſh and ſcorn cowardly to fly before the Wrath of Men, and ſo perſwade him to yield a cheerful Obedience to the firſt Command in the Text, *Be not afraid of their Terrour.*

It now follows that I ſhould explain and enforce the other Command or Direction given by St. *Peter* to the perſecuted Chriſtian, *viz. Neither be ye troubled*: But I ſhall reſerve this to be the firſt of theſe Diſcourſes upon the following Words of St. *Peter*, to which I refer in the Title Page; which, God willing & aſſiſting, I intend to publiſh, if theſe which are now come abroad ſhall be kindly received by true and ſerious Chriſtians, and found profitable to ſuch who either are already under the Croſs, or deſirous to take it up when they ſhall be called thereunto. I ſhall now add no more, but that excellent Collect of the moſt excellent Liturgy:

O God, who knoweſt us to be ſet in the midſt of ſo many and great Dangers, that by Reaſon of the Frailty of our Nature we cannot always ſtand upright; Grant to us ſuch Strength and Protection, as may ſupport us in all Dangers, and carry us through all Temptations, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. **Amen.**

FINIS.

3 DE60